1: Tew E-4 (no date) 1950 FTT Yao FTT

Mbale (plur. *mabale*), a breast. This includes all who are supposed to be descended from a common ancestress. Often the direct line of descent from the founding ancestress is not known for more than three or four generations. The small groups which can definitely claim to be 'of one breast' constitute the distinct matrilineal groups which live together in separate hamlets within a village. Each is undifferentiated in relation to other matrilineal groups, but internally each is differentiated on the principle of sibling unity.

The main emphasis of the kinship system is on the bond between a man and his sisters. Their relationship is summed up in the word *mbumba* (translated by Mitchell as 'sorority group'). A man speaking of his *mbumba* refers to all the women he calls sister, their daughters, and their daughters' daughters. Strictly speaking, female kin in the ascending generations are excluded, as belonging to the *mbumba* of his mother's brother. The 'warden' of a sorority group, *anyaw mbumba*, is the senior of the brothers and is responsible for the behaviour of the women in his charge; he appears for them in court and pays fines on their account. He plays an important part in the marriage negotiations. It is his duty to consult the diviner if his sister or her child falls ill, and to be chief mourner at the funeral of either of them, also providing medicine for the ritual purification at the end of the mourning period. Formerly these obligations were balanced by certain rights. He could sell some of them into slavery for his own personal reasons. This privilege is ended, but even to-day it is through his sorority group that a man achieves status and independence.

The principle of sibling unity is expressed in many other ways. A man and his sister reciprocally call each other *akambuwaga*. More usually, a woman calls her brother, elder or younger than herself, *asimwene* (a term of respect usually applied to a chief), for any brother may be regarded as warden of her sorority group. A man has the same duties to his younger brothers as to his sisters, so they also call him *asimwene*, but he calls them *mpwanga* 'younger brother', as they can never be in the position of warden in relation to him. Maternal uncles are called *akambuwa*, and a sister's son *ciputa*.

Within each matrilineal descent group, differentiation takes place between members according to whether they are siblings or not. A man's sorority group included ideally his own siblings and their female matrilineal descendants. His sister's daughters are also the sorority group of his sister's son, their brother, so that any woman can belong at any one moment to the sorority groups of her brother, her mother's brother, her mother's mother's brother, &c., but the effective one is that of her own brother, if adult. He is consulted first in small disputes, and at the marriage ceremony each party is represented by a brother as well as by a mother's brother. In the break-up of a hamlet (described below, p. 12), siblings tend to hold together more closely than cousins and to form groups of their own, so that each woman in the descent line is a potential point of cleavage. Tension between brothers as they compete for control of the sorority group is a source of friction within the sibling group which eventually leads to its disruption.

Since marriage is mainly matrilocal, and extra-village, the husband in his wife's village is seen as a stranger by all the members of her matrilineal descent group. There is a tendency for members of such descent groups to live together in a cluster of huts. The word 'hamlet' is used by Mitchell to indicate a cluster of huts, in which

1: Tew E-4 (no date) 1950 FT? Yao FT?

return to the *lupanda*, where the initiates are welcomed by their friends. An essential part of the ceremony which takes place at this stage is the exhibition of animal shapes made by the *m'mbiwa*, with mounds of earth, outlined in flour. These animal shapes differ from lodge to lodge. On the last night before the return to the village the initiates undergo a ceremonial bathing, each boy being carried to the stream by a woman, who thereafter is addressed as 'elder sister'. Finally, with new names, and freshly oiled and decorated, they march to the chief's village to be redeemed by him from the *m'mbiwa* with gifts of cloth. After initiation it is a deadly insult to call a boy by his child-name. All who pass through initiation together consider themselves bound by mutual obligations of hospitality.[1]

Girls' initiation takes place in three stages. First, there is *ciputo*, the general initiation before puberty, which corresponds to the boys' *lupanda*. It takes place at the same time of year, and though it lasts for less than a week, its conclusion is celebrated at *lupanda* jointly with the conclusion of the boys' initiation. A hut is built in the bush, like the long dormitory of the boys, and four days are spent in dancing and singing. Each girl (aged about eight years) is accompanied by a sponsor, a woman friend who continues to be her mentor during subsequent rites, and who assists in giving the girl instruction in her womanly duties. At the end the girls are bathed and anointed, dressed in new clothes, and each is carried to *lupanda* by her sponsor. Here they prove their skill in dancing and receive gifts from their friends. Ritual defloration follows the *ciputo* initiation.[2] Among Mohammedans, *clitoridectomy* used to be performed by a woman operator, but, it is said, was discontinued in about 1903 on account of the heavy mortality.[3]

After this first general celebration, first pregnancy and first birth are the occasions of separate rites for each girl. According to some informants there were once two ceremonies connected with pregnancy. One, for the young married men whose wives had not yet conceived, used to take place at the same time as *ciputo*; each man was attended by a woman sponsor not his wife, given good advice, and put through various tests of manhood. Mitchell does not confirm the present existence of this ceremony, but in the old days if a man was betrothed or married to a child going through her *ciputo* he had to accompany her.

The *litimo* ceremony takes place when a young married woman quickens with child for the first time.[4] The woman, with her sponsor and the married women of the neighbourhood, went out in procession for a ceremony of singing and dancing and instruction to the young couple, followed by a feast. Nowadays no men are allowed to attend *litimo*. A child born of a woman who had not undergone this rite used to be buried alive; nowadays her *anyaw mbumba* is charged by the chief.

Finally, six days after the first child is born, its naming ceremony forms a last initiation rite for its mother. The husband is formally led into her hut by her sponsor and the married women of the neighbourhood, and the child is taken out for the first time to the accompaniment of feasting and dancing.

Most Yao men and women act as sponsors of initiates at least once, and all parti-

[1] Sources for boys' initiation: Stannus and Davey, 1913; Werner, 1906, pp. 114-6; Stannus, c. 1910, pp. 107-83; Hodnel, 1933, pp. 19 sq.; Johnston, 1897, p. 403; Weule, c. 1909, p. 309.
[2] Stannus, c. 1910, p. 170. [3] Hodnel, c. 1910, p. 196.
[4] Ibid., c. 1910, p. 174; Hodnel, 1933, p. 23, calls it *simanko* (Sulg).

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

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a. Free men are under their elder brother in the first instance, but they may carry their cases to the headman of their village or even to the chief of the country.
b. Slaves were entirely under their own master.[1]

The headmen's subservience to the chief is described in the following passage:

[561] [616 913] [721] [47]

In all public transactions the headman represents his village. He receives the chief's orders and sees them carried out. When he kills an elephant he sends one of the tusks to the chief. Should he kill twenty elephants he is not expected to give up twenty tusks—two or three would be sufficient. If he shoots a large buck he gives one haunch of venison. For all such tributes he expects to receive in return a present (generally a little powder). . . . He is expected to attend the chief's parliaments unless he is under an elder brother in which case he is not allowed to speak, except when especially commissioned. Headmen are expected to report all cases of war, but they often attack enemies without telling their chief beforehand, saying, 'Let him hear of the enterprise when it succeeds.' Yet this is dangerous unless they are sure of success, and well acquainted with the chief's private sentiments. On reporting an attack they present the chief with part of the booty. In times of war each headman when summoned, must follow his chief's flag, otherwise his village is burned down, and all that fail to escape are killed or enslaved.[2]

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Yet within the framework of this organization villages were markedly autonomous. MacDonald's description, which I have just quoted, brings this out very well. Elsewhere he writes: 'The chief may often have less influence than powerful headmen, and we have known cases where he simply contented himself with grumbling when his headmen acted contrary to his desire.'[3] The chief did not differ greatly from his more powerful headmen. A certain amount of ritual in terms of ancestor worship embellished his position, and he had some ascendancy over village headmen to whom he had given land. Yet, in the last analysis, the chief had to rely on his personal following and military power to subjugate headmen who were becoming too powerful. The chief was therefore in direct competition with his subject village headmen, and involved in a constant struggle with them for followers. MacDonald describes how the chief himself was a

[1] MacDonald, *Africana*, i. 133.
[2] MacDonald, *Africana*, i. 133. [3] MacDonald, *Africana*, i. 133.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

village headman and had to administer his slaves and relatives in his village in the same way as a village headman.[1] MacDonald shrewdly observes:

> Where the chief sees occasion to interfere with his subordinates he generally consults his own interest. He will say to a headman, 'I see that you have been behaving badly to that subject of yours. You cannot get on with him: he must leave you and come and dwell in my own village.' The chief thus secures another servant.[2]

Another writer observed, 'As a chief's power consists of the number of his subjects the loss of a man is a serious matter.'[3]

A village headman also tried to strengthen his position against the chief and against other village headmen by attracting to himself as many followers and dependants as he could. The process whereby a man might increase his status is described as follows:

> However large the settlement may become, the man that is first in the field is the chief or headman. In course of time he adorns this position by acquiring wealth. He may shoot some buck and get possession of their skins. With these he goes to the Mangoni country and buys slaves. An old person he obtains for a single skin, but a young slave costs two, and women cost much more than men. The female slaves thus bought are his junior wives and he keeps them busy in hoeing the farm, and all such female duties. The male slaves he employs in farming, building, making baskets, sewing garments and such masculine pursuits. He keeps all these persons strictly at their duties, and at the same time welcomes an opportunity of selling them at a profit. If his daughters were unmarried, he would give them slave-husbands. The natives aim at 'replenishing the earth and subduing it'. As it is no expense for them to rear families, they are all desirous to have many children.

Besides this increase of the village from the chief's own resources, there may be an accession of freemen. After the settlement is begun, a man may come to its founder and say, 'I wish to live with you.' The village chief gives him permission and calls him 'younger brother'. The newcomer brings his family, builds a house, and cultivates a farm in the same way as his chief. A freeman may leave his present chief and take up his abode with another, whose subject he becomes. His former chief has no longer any authority over him

[1] MacDonald, *Africana*, i. 134. [2] MacDonald, *Africana*, i. 133-4.
[3] Hynde, R. S., 'Among the Machinga People', *The Scottish Geographical Magazine*, viii (1892), 636-643.

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(22. 559 61 pressing their claims on many grounds. They may stress that they have a large village under them and that they have many children to initiate, and argue that their villages are far away from the nearest headman who has these rights. Or they may use their rank and connection with the chief. If all else fails they may threaten to move to another chiefdom. Punya threatened to do this.

(22. 559 61 579 ● In 1947, Punya, an Administrative village headman in Chiwale area, had 43 tax-payers under him and thought that he should have initiation rights. He had come to Chiwale's in 1933 after the village had split in Chikowi's area near Zombe. He had relatives in Kapalowa's village in Chiwale's area. He argued with Chiwale that his uncle had had initiation rights. Chiwale on the other hand, argued that Punya village was so close to his own—a matter of under a mile—that he could not consider it. This argument went on for some months. Eventually Punya told the chief that he was going to leave his area. Chiwale then reacted to some extent and offered Punya the permission to use the *ciputo* basket, that is, the right to conduct girls' initiation ceremonies. Punya, after consulting his sister, took this and was satisfied.

But the chief is not always cowed by the threat to leave his area. He is sometimes able to draw on his official position to control his headmen. The arguments between Makura and Nkimbuka illustrate this very well.

Makura was an Administrative headman of some standing in Chiwale's area. He had been one of the invading headmen and was entitled to wear the scarlet headband. In 1947, he had 101 tax-payers under him and had been given the right to hold boys' and girls' initiation ceremonies at least 30 years ago. Nkimbuka on the other hand was a comparative newcomer. He came from Kawinga's area in about 1930. He is of Nyanja stock but has adopted the Yao language and customs. His village in 1947 had 23 tax-payers and was about 300 yards from Makura's. Early in 1947, Nkimbuka started quarrelling with Makura about the right to boys' initiation ceremonies. He felt that he ought to have rights as well as Makura. Eventually he told Makura that he would refuse to take the boys to his initiation ceremonies. Seething with discontent Nkimbuka went to complain about Makura to Chiwale, and told him that he had had an argument with Makura and that he was going to leave the area because of it. Chiwale called Makura and asked him what the trouble was. Makura told Chiwale that Nkimbuka was jealous of the basket. Chiwale

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then told Ntimbuka that he could not give a sacrifice basket to him because his village was so close to Makata's. Ntimbuka was not satisfied with this and continued agitating. Chiwalo, at last exasperated, threatened Ntimbuka that if he had any more trouble he would send him to Kawinga to be dealt with. Kawinga of course is the Native Authority in the area and holds the power of arresting headmen under Section 12 of the Ordinance. Ntimbuka was duly cowed by this threat and meekly agreed to send his boys to Makata's initiation ceremonies.

Chiwalo had to support Makata against Ntimbuka. Makata was a powerful headman: he had rank from his descent and a large village under him. Ntimbuka was a Newcomer and he had only a fifth of the followers that Makata had. If it meant losing followers it was better to lose the smaller village. As it was Chiwalo could use the power of the White Administration to keep Ntimbuka within his area and yet keep him subservient.

A Newcomer is unlikely to be given both boys' and girls' initiation rights. He is more likely to be able to get only one of the rights. Table XVI sets out the number of headmen in

TABLE XVI

Numbers of Headmen holding Boys' and Girls' Initiation Rights among Aboriginal, Invader and Newcomer Headmen

Type of Initiation Right	Aborigines	Invaders	Newcomers	Total
Both boys' and girls' init. rights	—	17	14	31
Boys' init. rights only	1	6	10	17
Girls' init. rights only	1	11	31	44
No init. rights	16	84	198	298
Total	18	119	253	390*
% Init. holders	11·3	29·4	21·7	24·3

Combining Aboriginal and Invader totals.

$a = 31 \quad 3^a = 0{\cdot}48; \quad p = 0{\cdot}03234$.

* Total excludes the 24 headmen who have the right to wear the scarlet headband.

each category who hold initiation ceremonies. While more Invaders have the right to both ceremonies the proportion holding

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The chief as an important village headman (cont.)

[601] 643 622 554 178 is usually addressed by a kinship term, either *baba* (father) or *ambuje* (master or grandparent). When he is referred to, his name is not used. Village headmen are owners or wardens of villages (*anyene mizi*) but only those headmen of some standing are referred to as *mwenye*.

643 622 554 761 Important village headmen, like the chief, are in mystical danger from pollution by death. They cannot come to the hut in which a corpse is lying; and they cannot eat the chicken which has been brought to them by relatives of the deceased to announce the death. Like the chief too, an important headman may be buried in a tomb in his village and not in the graveyard.

643 622 554 578 691 But an important element in their relationship nowadays is that the Administration will support the chief against a village headman when it comes to a trial of strength, and that a headman these days is precluded by modern conditions from setting up chiefdoms as he did in the old days. Village headmen therefore must struggle for power against their fellows and the chief within the modern Administrative framework. Some attempts are made to resist the power of the chief but these are rarely successful. The dispute between Liwonde and Ndenda illustrates this.

Ndenda was an Ngoni headman, who in 1947 had 284 tax-payers under him (Liwonde, the chief, had 186 in his village). Ndenda had come into Liwonde's area before the White invasion and had surrendered with his relative Mlelemba, to Liwonde. The second Liwonde had given him both initiation rights but, unlike his relative, he did not have the right to wear a scarlet headband.

In 1938 or thereabouts, Liwonde decided to move his village site from the Shire River to its present site about half-way up the Great Rift scarp. He sent two of his young men to look for a suitable site, and to plant some mango trees there when they had found one. Ndenda heard of this and sent one of his men to take Liwonde's men into custody. He took their hoes away and then told them to go back to tell the chief they were planting in his (Ndenda's) land. In due course Liwonde moved up to his new site, and asked Ndenda why he had taken the hoes away and whether he owned the country, i.e. was the chief. Ndenda now argued that Mlelemba's ancestors had been given the rights of chieftainship over this area and that the first Mlelemba in the area had given Liwonde some elephant tusks for these rights. Liwonde replied that the chief has a right to tusks and that many had given tusks to him but were not entitled for that reason to rights of chieftainship. Liwonde handled this situation by calling a meeting of the village headmen in the area. They assembled

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and the claims of Ndenda were debated. The headmen supported Liwonde in his claim that the tusks were part of the chief's rights and that when Mlelemba had come he had come 'to get fire from the chief'. Liwonde then upbraided Ndenda for imagining that because he had so many followers he was a chief, and fined him 10s. for being insolent.

The struggle between Liwonde and Ndenda did not end however. Some years afterwards a man came to Liwonde and said that he wanted to live in his area. This man was a complete stranger and had no relatives there. Liwonde sent him to Ndenda's village. Later while living in the village, this man stole some cloth. He was arrested and Ndenda brought him to the chief saying that the chief was responsible for him. Liwonde told Ndenda that he was being insolent again and that the responsibility must rest with him because the man had married into his village. He ordered Ndenda to pay £1 to compensate the victims of the theft. This Ndenda did but in his view this was tantamount to being chased out of the chief's area. He therefore moved with his children across the boundary northwards into Jalasi's area, and told his unrelated villagers to follow him. They refused to leave Liwonde's area. He was helpless and could do nothing about it. He returned to Liwonde's area a broken man and died shortly afterwards. His eldest son took charge of the village after, but so far no successor has been found.

The struggle between Ndenda and Liwonde has some interesting features about it. The strength of the chief in his Government position is not as evident as it has been in other struggles, as, for example, between Jalasi and Kalonga, or between Chiwalo and Ntimbuka, in the cases I cited earlier.[1] It appears only indirectly. Ndenda did not appeal to the District Commissioner against the fine as he might have done if he had felt his position to be more secure. The case history also shows how Liwonde ranged his other important headmen, 47 per cent of whom were kinsmen or co-invaders, around him against Ndenda who was neither. It shows also that Ndenda's reaction to what he felt to be an injustice, typically enough, was to emigrate and to try to injure the chief by reducing his followers. When this failed he was defeated and it was his downfall, for, like a chief, 'a headman without people is nothing'.[2]

[1] Pp. 86 and 96.

[2] *Mfumu sapo mapanda ilanda sapuro mafumbo*: 'A chief who has no people is not a chief'—a saying frequently quoted to emphasize the dependence of the chief on his subjects.

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villages, however, the headman's activities may be as circumscribed by ritual prohibitions as the chief's are.

The village headman is subject not only to mystical dangers but also to other dangers deriving from his position of authority. It is significant that villagers never go to a diviner to find out the cause of a village headman's death. When I asked informants why this was so, they said, 'Well, what's the use of it? He has enemies on all sides in the village who are trying to kill him with their magic.' In harmony with this view of village headmanship, the symbolic object which represents the village headman in the diviners' gourds I have seen, is a small ring of grass (*singwe*), a copy of the grass cushion women place on their heads when they are carrying loads. This symbolizes the ring of enemies which surrounds the village headman. The saying 'the tortoise defecates on the one who carries it',[1] usually applied to chiefdomship, applies equally well to a village headman.

A village headman may expect little material benefit from his position of authority. If he is an Administrative village headman he may be paid a small annuity of 5*s.* or 10*s.*[2] Returning labour migrants may give him a blanket or a military overcoat, or perhaps a few shillings, but this is not usual. If he is not a strict Moslem he will almost certainly be given a pot of beer from every brewing made for sale in the local 'club house'. On the other hand, if an important stranger, particularly a White official, arrives in the village he feels he must give his guest a chicken. It is mannerly to reciprocate with another gift, but not all Whites know this, or, if they do, do not observe it. In particular if the chief comes to his village, he will be expected to entertain him and here can expect no recompense—the chief 'eats from his country'.

The Yao know that the position of headman is no sinecure. Frequently the one chosen to succeed refuses to accept the position, especially if he is well placed in employment. It is significant that the word for an heir is *lingwe*[3]—the one who is trapped. An

[1] *Nyoka jilumula mujowe lwajipale.*

[2] Until recently this was true. As I was leaving the field in 1949, I heard that the Administration had decided to abandon this system in favour of one in which only group headmen would be remunerated.

[3] Substantive form of the passive of the verb *lunga*—to set a trap as for animals. This word is not widely known, especially among the younger Yao.

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disease *ndaba*.[1] This disease, as we have seen, affects the sexually inactive when they are brought into contact with those who are sexually active. But the disease will only affect the members of the matrilineage of the errant person. For example, suppose a labour migrant is coming home from Southern Rhodesia and has, among other things, a few pounds of salt in his baggage for a gift to his relatives. Suppose also that while he is returning he has promiscuous intercourse. The salt becomes charged with sexual heat and if he gives it to any of his matrilineal relatives to cook with, they will contract this disease. He must therefore give the salt to members of another matrilineage, even if they live in the same village.

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It is when the unity of the matrilineage is threatened, by either death or division, that its mystical value appears most clearly. When a member of the matrilineage dies the whole matrilineage is thrown into mourning and remains continent for three days. On the fourth day they perform a ritual purification and some members resume sexual relations, but the closest matrilineal relatives, such as the mother and uterine siblings, remain continent for the remainder of the mourning period, which is about 56 days.

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It is tension within the lineage which is most closely attended by dire results. The most important effect of this tension is accusations of sorcery. Good relationships among members of a matrilineage are adjured, mainly because friction opens the way to sorcerers. The Yao believe that sorcerers kill their matrilineal relatives so that they may share the flesh with other sorcerers. The sorcerer is fundamentally a wicked person and may kill any relative but is more likely to kill those whom he hates. Hence it is most important that relationships are kept amicable within a matrilineage for fear that sorcery ensues.

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An interesting variation of the dangers of sorcery is the belief that sorcerers take the opportunity of squabbles within a matrilineage to kill one of the members. The rationale behind this is that the diviner's instruments are unable to detect the origin of the sorcery beyond the immediate cause. A diviner will indicate that the cause of death of, say, a child is sorcery, but that the witch is obscured behind the quarrelling words of some relative. Consequently, danger to a matrilineage ensues when one of its

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[1] See Chap. V, p. 111.

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members gives to an outsider and grumbles to him about the family squabbles[1] and quarrels. The outsider then takes the opportunity of using this squabble to introduce his sorcery into the lineage. The Yao greatly fear backbiting because of their dread of sorcery and none dreads it more than a village headman, a warden of a sorority-group,[2] or a person in the position of having to keep a matrilineage or section together. These people are continually adjuring the women under them—for it is the women who are believed to be the main culprits—not to fight among themselves; and if they do, not to take their complaints to an outsider but to the senior member of the matrilineage. The significance of this in relation to lineage unity is plain enough.

Apart from sorcery, strained relationships between members of a matrilineage are believed to be dangerous for other reasons. Malice may adversely affect people who are in mystically dangerous states. The most common of these states is pregnancy. If a woman has a quarrel with a matrilineage member while she is pregnant she is likely to have a difficult labour. The Yao say 'the womb has heard these bad words'. Another situation where malice or quarrelling will cause difficulties is in hunting. The luck of the chase is capricious and malice may easily bring bad fortune to an otherwise good hunter. For example, a successful hunter once gave each of his two sisters a piece of venison. Each complained that the other had been given the larger piece and quarrelled vehemently about it for weeks. The hunter now found that no game fell into his traps. He went to a diviner who indicated the quarrel of the sisters as the cause of his failure and told the hunter to get them to 'blow water' (*hopenye*). He did this; good relationships were restored and his traps were filled once more.

These deleterious effects, like the curse, are connected in some way with the ancestor spirits. This is sometimes expressed quite clearly when a person is called upon to 'blow water'. A mother who wishes to revoke a curse, a woman who wishes to recant her malice towards her matrilineal relative who is suffering in childbirth, or a man whose sister's son is ill supposedly because

[1] This is called *nsani*, which I have translated as 'backbiting'. This idea is extremely important, as we shall see later.

[2] I.e. those men who are responsible for their sisters and their descendants. See p. 143 ff.

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of his malice towards him, might equally be called upon to do this. The person makes a statement to the effect that he bears no malice and hopes that the sufferer will be well. For example, a woman in Cikoja's village who was called upon to 'blow water' during the labour pains of her mother's younger sister's daughter's daughter,[1] because they had quarrelled over a sifting basket, put some water in her mouth, spat it out and said: 'Those words I spoke: the basket is mine. This is my child. Both are mine. When I spoke and asked my child about it, they were not words to place in my heart, so that to-day we should have to go to the diviner because my child is hitched[2] and be accused because of the sifting basket. These words I push aside. I do not know whether there are other words that we fought about, but if they are these, my daughter's child come out!'[3] Sometimes the ancestors are specifically invoked, '*Cende, cende damauka . . .*' 'Please, please, O spirits . . .' This is a public confession of the tension within the lineage and it allows the lineage leaders to attempt to straighten out the difficulties, as they did in this case.[4]

These beliefs in mystical dangers of one sort or another which beset the matrilineage as the result of bad feelings within it, have the effect of constraining matrilineage members to maintain peaceable relations among themselves and are, therefore, conducive to maximum solidarity.

It is clear from MacDonald's writings that in earlier times the periodic offerings to the spirits of the ancestors was a valuable way in which the solidarity of the matrilineage was expressed. With the introduction of Islam and Christianity these sacrifices have disappeared. I have not worked in Christian areas long enough to be able to say whether the ancestor cult still persists. In the northern area, however, I can say that the ancestor cult survives as part of the practice of Islam. Periodically, feasts are held in

[1] See the history of the division in Cikoja lineage, pp. 163-6.

[2] *Kukolokwa*, i.e. the child cannot be born.

[3] *Una makilingako ciele cile cenene. Aje mwanenge. Yenepe yenyene. Pinamwenge ndimenye, kumbenye mwanenge, ngimiwe makilile gakwiko kwiwe, gati ngakwi kilo ndimenda kwiyenge ndakilokwa mwanenge ndimakwenda mu lipenge lye ciele. Cilepe ngwimakwe. Kwakwi ngapali gati gimwe kanyanda mwako ngyenge makilile gakwe, cimbala cenge cilepene.*

[4] I have drawn attention to the cathartic effect of accusations of sorcery and public confession of guilt in a paper, 'A Note on the African Conception of Causality', *The Nyasaland Journal*, v, 2 (July 1952), 27-8.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

It is difficult to over-emphasize the importance of the sorority-group in everyday life. There is hardly a social situation in which the relationships of a man to his dependent female matrilineal kin are not involved. Probably marriage is the most frequent context in which his duties to and responsibilities for his sorority-group emerge. When a man wishes to marry a woman, he must get the consent of her brother. Ideally, it is a woman's brother who gives the consent, and if one asks a Yao how he gets married to any particular woman he will answer immediately, 'You go to ask her brother.' When consent has been obtained the woman's brother seeks out the man's brother and formally meets him, thereby setting the public seal on the relationships between the man and the woman. This gives the husband particular rights over his wife and her activities. After this, the difficulties of any of the marriage partners are the concern of the two sponsoring relatives (*acinamangowe*) whom I have called 'marriage sureties'. They meet to discuss the illnesses of either of the marriage partners or their children and try to settle the differences that arise in the married life of their wards. They must be consulted before the marriage can end, and in fact they perform the act that ends the marriage, i.e. one pays a nominal sum of say 2*s.* to the other.

According to the Yao, women are quite helpless in their relationships with others, in illness or in any court cases, and must always have a man to look after them. They are seen to be as dependent on him as children are upon their parents. A statement made to me by old Naliwa, a man who has been looking after a sorority-group for years, reflects this attitude of the men towards the women in their care.

> These dependent women (*mbumba*) are as annoying as children to look after. They are *mizusi*[1] indeed. If a child is ill they go to tell their brother who says, 'Very well, I shall come to see the child.' If he is not very quick to do it they are likely to be backbiting. If he finds the child very ill he goes to tell the marriage sureties of its father, and they go to a diviner to look for medicine for the sick child. Then the sisters say that he is a good man because he gets on with the job when a person is ill.
>
> Soon the child's mother becomes ill. Someone goes to tell her brother who says that he will come to see her. He visits her husband's

[1] Backbiting. See Chap. VI, pp. 137-8.

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QL 578 S93 marriage surety and together they consult diviners and find medicine until she recovers. Then he goes back to his village.

He has no sooner got back when someone comes along to tell him that the child is ill again. He says, 'I am busy, I have some work to do. Tell someone else to go to the diviner.' The messenger goes back to his sisters and they say to each other: 'He is not a good man. He refuses to go to the diviner for the child.' Another says, 'Yes, it is so. Our brother is not diligent and when he comes here he will get no food from us. He eats our food but he does not work for us. Let us ask someone else to look after us. Our younger brother is a good man indeed.' Then everyone agrees that this should be so. The one that all said was a good man before, they all now say is bad. Then the sisters go along to tell the other brother who says, 'Go and tell my elder brother.' The sisters reply that he is not a good man and say, 'We want you to look after us.' He agrees and goes to the diviner to get medicine.

The next morning a husband goes off to his village without saying goodbye.[1] The wife now goes along to tell her younger brother who says that he can do nothing about it and that she will have to tell her elder brother. She returns to her village crying, and tells her sisters that she told her brother about her husband's leaving and that he refused to have anything to do with it. Then one of the sisters says, 'Yes, the elder one is a good man, not like that bad young one. If this one were the elder one he would have already gone to get the man back.' Others say, 'Yes, that young one is not good at all. He is a sulky one. Is he not a sorcerer? Go to the big one and tell him.'

Then the woman goes to the hut of the elder brother and tells him of her difficulties. He tells her to go and fetch her husband and if he refuses to come back, to tell him. This she does and he refuses to return. She reports this to his elder brother. He tells her that his younger brother will return and if he does not they will come to talk matters over. The woman goes back to her village and goes to see her elder brother to tell him what she has done. He says, 'Very well, my sister, if he does not come to-day I shall go there to-morrow. Now go home and give the children some food.' When she goes back to the village she says, 'That brother is a good one indeed. He is diligent. He is going to fetch my husband back, if he does not return to-day.' If the man has not come by the next morning the woman goes to tell her brother. He goes to the husband's

[1] *Kwandeka*—to go off in a huff, to go off without saying goodbye. This is a sure sign that there is something wrong and that some action needs to be taken.

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village and seeks out his marriage surety. They call him and tell him that the woman's brother has come to take him back to the village. He says that it is all right and that he will follow that evening. The brother goes back and tells his sister to cook porridge because her husband will be coming that evening, and then he goes home. The husband returns.

The woman now goes to tell her brother that her husband has returned and he says that he will come to visit him in the morning. Next morning her brother comes to the hut and asks her husband why he had left. 'You were cross about something and you did not come to tell me. Now tell me why you left.' The husband now tells him and they talk it over. If they fail to reach an understanding they go to tell the husband's sureties and discuss the case fully. If the woman is wrong her brother reprimands her and if the man is wrong his sureties reprimand him.

To live with a surety-group needs courage.[1] You must not listen to backbiting. If you listen to the tales of others then you will not be able to live with your surety-group because your heart has no fierceness. A surety-group needs a man who has no fear. Then the women listen to what he says. He will say to his sister, 'Sister, hoe your gardens well. Do not have intercourse in the bush because it will finish your children with ash.[2] You must respect your husband and not tell him lies because he will not trust you and will be frightened of you. Listen to what I tell you. Things will be peaceful in your house if you come to tell us what is going on. If you do not tell us then there will be lots of friction.' Then the people say about a man whose sisters are not very happy, 'Who is that man who is not watching[3] his surety-group well?' Then the people will mention his name and they will laugh at him. If the surety-group are living happily together he is a good man and he does not listen to the backbiting. His surety-group are obeying him well and he lives happily with them.

In this account one cannot but be struck by the ambivalence of the relationship of brothers and sisters. Now they hate each other and now they love each other, depending largely on the fierceness of the moments. But the tie is the strongest in Yao social structure; while the relationships between the surety-group and any particular brother may vary, the relationship between brothers and sisters in general is unassailable. When

[1] Wichikolikha mbeu; perhaps more literally translated as "a open heart".
[2] A reference to adultery. See Chap. V, p. 111.
[3] In the sense of watching them the right way to live, or their manners.

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The events leading up to a split as a rule follow a definite pattern. Very frequently indeed an accusation of sorcery is involved.[1] This usually stimulates a dissatisfied warden to gather his dependants together and to move off to found a new village. Elsewhere I have set out in detail the typical events which precede a village break-up when the lineage splits after a man quarrels with his mother's younger sister's sons.[2] These splits are not always successful because the seniority of the older relative, especially if he is a headman of some standing, may serve to reunite the village, and the leader of the dissident group may be unable to maintain its independence. This is what happened in Mwambajila village.

Mwambajila is one of the more important village headmen in Jalasi's area. The tension between him and his mother's younger sister's son Mbwana Somo reached a climax after a series of deaths among Mbwana Somo's children. He consulted a diviner and found that Mwambajila was the sorcerer causing these deaths. Mbwana Somo was very angry at this and told his sisters that they ought to leave the village and go to live in Liwonde's area, i.e. about 15 miles away. Eventually he persuaded them to move and they went to live on the Mwanje river banks. But the deaths continued. The women now started to be worried because they had left Mwambajila's village

[1] The implication of this cannot be understood without some knowledge of Yao divining procedure. The type of divining is usually by gourd and objects (*ukombe*). The diviner first of all establishes the reason for the visit, i.e. death, illness, theft, or whatever it is. He then consults his gourd and throws into his hand a variety of symbolic objects. He builds a story round these objects, and finally pronounces that he sees some person whom he vaguely defines. The consultor is then asked to mention who this could be. Though sorcery is supposed to be practised mainly in order to get human flesh for ghoulish feasts, it is not believed to act haphazard. In other words, a sorcerer is supposed to select his victims for revenge as well as for meat. The selecting process at work, therefore, when the consultor seeks to reconcile the diviner's findings with his own suspicions, are that he should select someone who is obviously evil, i.e. from his point of view, one with whom he has been quarrelling, and he should appraise the possible motivation for sorcery. After he has made the selection the stone is tossed by the diviner and the consultor may later submit a chicken to the poison ordeal to test the diviner's findings.

This, of course, confirms Evans-Pritchard's analysis of Azande witchcraft and I have acknowledged my debt to him for stimulus both from his book and from the discussions we have had on the topic. I assume his analysis in my discussion. See Evans-Pritchard, E. E., *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande*, Clarendon Press (Oxford, 1937).

[2] In *Some Villages*. Case History B, 321.

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as he was supposed to be the sorcerer. Suspicion fell on Mbwana Somu and eventually one of his sisters went back to Mwambajila and complained to him. Later the sisters consulted a diviner and found, as they suspected, that Mbwana Somu was the sorcerer. Thereupon, they returned to Mwambajila and left Mbwana Somu living alone with his wife.

Here is an example of a village which did not manage to maintain its identity but returned to be re-integrated into its village of origin.

Conflicts between collateral brothers are not frequent. This is for two reasons. Firstly, the opposition between lineage segments is usually expressed in a conflict between a man and his mother's brother, a fact which is no doubt related to the opposition of proximate generations. Secondly, lineages seldom persist long enough to contain within them several segments in which collateral brothers are leaders.

Conflicts seem to occur more frequently among uterine brothers, a fact which is significant in the light of the particularly strong bonds which unite them. The relationship between uterine brothers is much the same as that between sisters.[1] They are intimately linked by their bond of kinship and depend on one another for care and support. Usually the elder brother has his younger brothers in his care, in the same way that he has his sisters.

But at the same time they compete for the control of the sorority-group. A man, we have seen, can seek prestige in the indigenous political system only by becoming a village headman. He can become a village headman only by mustering his sisters and setting up a small hamlet with them. The elder brother prevents his younger brothers from doing this because the sorority-group is usually under his care. The younger brother can gain control only if he can persuade his sisters that the elder is a sorcerer, or incapable, or in some way unsuitable for his position. Hence the frequent accusations of sorcery among brothers: it is a rationalization of a hostility arising from the structural position of uterine brothers, which, in view of the commonly accepted strong sentiments uniting brothers, may not be otherwise expressed.

The break-up of Mponda's village in 1940 clearly illustrates

[1] I have dealt with this more fully in my essay in *Seven Tribes*.

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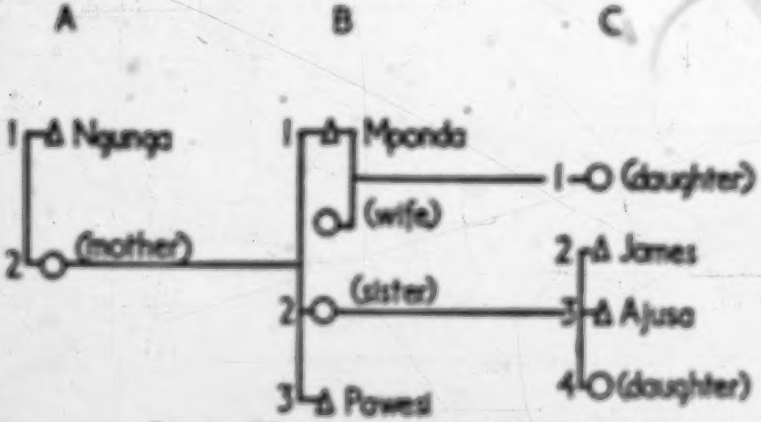
how the opposition of brothers emerges in a situation where the lineage is concerned.



Reference Genealogy. Mponda Village.

Mponda, a village headman, was married virilocally. One day his daughter went to the pounding point in the village and found that her cross-cousin, the daughter of the headman's sister, was there. A quarrel arose between the two girls over the pounding mortar. Presently they started to fight. The wife of *Mponda* then came out and caught hold of her husband's sister's daughter and beat her. *Mponda's* sister had gone to draw water and was just returning. She heard her daughter crying out and ran to the place to find her sister-in-law beating her. The two women had a quarrel about this and separated with bad feelings. The next morning the quarrel broke out again. In the altercation that morning the headman's sister rebuked the headman's wife for behaving in a way which did not befit her position. The headman's wife on the other hand threatened to leave the village if this went on. The bickering continued for some time and eventually the two women came to blows. The headman's sister, who got the worst of this encounter, now decided to take the matter up to the headman. When she told him about it he refused to listen to her complaint. He told her that he had brought his wife to the village and that he did not want to have her treated like a slave. Another sister now chimed in and said that *Mponda* ought to invite his younger brother along to help him to settle the case. Another recommended their leaving him altogether because he was telling his wife to despise his sisters. To this *Mponda* replied that the village was his and that his sisters were only children

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578 and that he could not understand who could be inducing them to
593 talk like this. He told them also that as far as he was concerned they
604 could report the case to whomsoever they wished. The women came out of the hut and went straight to Paweni who was the headman's younger brother. He told them to go back and to wait a while before they took further action.

578 After four days had passed the headman's sister who had fought
593 with the headman's wife, became ill. In the morning the sisters sent
759 a message to Mponda but he did not come. They sent another
767 message to Paweni who came and asked if they had told Mponda. They said that they had, but he had refused to come. Paweni called James and Ajuna, the sister's sons of the headman, and told them that he would tell the headman that they were going to find out the cause of the illness. This they did. The diviner indicated that the headman had caused the illness by sorcery, because of the fight between his wife and sisters. Paweni tested the divination by giving a chicken some poison. It died, indicating that the divination was accurate. He took the chicken's head to Ngungu who was Mponda's perpetual mother's brother.

When Ngungu heard this he refused to believe it. However, he agreed to send for Mponda and to ask him about it. When he did so Mponda denied the accusation. Ngungu now produced the chicken's head and accused Mponda of being a liar. At that moment a child came to tell them that the woman was dead and the interview ended. They went to the funeral and the next morning they decided to have a post-mortem meeting (*mapete*) in order to decide the cause of the death. Mitumoni, one of Nyambi's perpetual sons, represented the chief. Ngungu opened the discussion by telling the meeting that the woman had been killed by the headman because of the fight between his sisters and wife. Mitumoni asked how they knew this and Ngungu told of the divination and the poison ordeal. He then asked Mponda if he had heard what had been said and what he had to say. Mponda replied that he knew nothing of it. Ngungu said that Mponda was a bad man and that the others would leave him and he would have to live alone. Mitumoni told Paweni and Ngungu that they must not leave the village. Ngungu replied that it was impossible to stay there while Mponda was so bad. If the women stayed with him he would finish them all. Paweni collected 30 of the 40 huts that made up the village and took them away to Chikwao's area, a distance of about 15 miles. Those who stayed behind with Mponda were his 'children' and some unrelated people.

593 This case brings to the fore the position of the younger brother
578 as a constant challenge to his elder for the care of his sisters.

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The threat that lies over the head of an inefficient warden of a security-group is that of losing them to his younger brother, and it is scarcely possible to exaggerate the frequency with which this takes place in Yao society.

Intra-lineage Transfer and Succession Disputes

The competition between brothers is heightened where the succession to an important name is involved. The rule of succession indicates a man's eldest sister's first-born son as the rightful heir. Informants in Jalasi's area told me that long ago the succession used to pass along the line of collateral brothers first, before dropping a generation to the sister's sons. It is true that in Jalasi's genealogy there are one or two early successions from a man to his most senior brothers, but recently the succession has passed regularly to sisters' sons. MacDonald, writing in 1880, quoted the succession rule for the Mangoche Yao to be 'from a man to his eldest surviving brother and then to the sister's son',[1] but he describes in another part of the book the dispute for Malemia's name involving the deceased chief's younger brother and his sister's son, in which the sister's son's claims prevailed over those of the younger brother.[2] Stannus, writing of the Machinga in 1922, gives the rule of succession as I found it,[3] and suggested that MacDonald's interpretation of the Malemia succession dispute in 1875, was really a mistake, and that both disputants were sisters' sons of the head chief, but of different lineage sections. I cannot decide which account is true, but there seems to be no reason why MacDonald's general rule should be incorrect, especially since so much of the other material he recorded seems to be accurate. Also, as far as I could see, there are no differences in the Mangoche and Machinga Yao in succession to-day, so that it seems likely that there has been a change from adelphic succession to a straight system of matrilineal primogeniture. One is tempted to find a reason for this in the strong emphasis on patrilineal primogeniture in Islam, which was becoming widely accepted in these areas in the middle of the nineteenth century. Unfortunately I cannot bring direct evidence to support this hypothesis.

While the succession rule may indicate someone as having the

[1] MacDonald, *Africana*, i. 189. [2] MacDonald, *Africana*, ii. 190.
[3] Stannus, 'The Wayao of Southern Nyasaland', 277.

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622 613 541 the children of Ncilaga (C5) and Bt. Mkwinda (C6). There was a big difference in the ages of these two women. Ncilaga died nearly 30 years ago but Bt. Mkwinda died in 1948. When Cikoja V (C1) died in 1936, Salimu II (D3), who was born in about 1914, was very much younger than the present Cikoja VI (E7), who was born about 1895. Ncilaga (C5) had no sons, nor had Atabiya (D1), her eldest daughter, so the succession passed to the only son of Amaliama (D2) who was the senior male in that generation. Salimu II, genealogically senior to the present Cikoja, is to be the next headman. He has married a 'cross-cousin' (his mother's mother's brother's daughter's daughter's daughter) and lives in the village. He has already taken over the affairs in one section of the village. The other section has moved out and built about half a mile away with the present Cikoja VI. Note that the junior house—i.e. the descendants of Cisekeka (A2)—are completely out of the succession. Wegami's (E1) eldest son, Cilimba (F1), is living virilocally with Cikoja VI in his section of the village and is already opposed to the prospective village headman Salimu. He is likely to be the village headman after Salimu dies and may even push his claim when the present Cikoja VI dies, because Salimu has been accused of sorcery on several occasions.

622 578 604 The conflict between sister's sons and mother's brothers at successions has all but fallen away. The people oppose with some vigour the idea that a younger brother should succeed. Frequently the chief or headman would rather his younger brother succeed, and sometimes indicates him as his successor. Kawinga, for example, has given his pre-succession name of Mlomba to his younger brother and many say this is tantamount to announcing Mlomba as the next Kawinga. This is violently repudiated by most people I have spoken to and they indicate a sister's son as the likely successor. Jalasi too, before he died in 1941, indicated Mbawa, his mother's younger sister's son as the successor, but when it came to the point a sister's son succeeded. The weight of custom is in favour of the sister's sons and usually the succession is fought out among uterine or collateral brothers in the first descending generation.

613 661 A matrilineal relative is always chosen to be chief in preference to any other, but sometimes there is no heir. Other things being equal an unsuitable matrilineal relative will be chosen, or a

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adjusts itself to the changes in its composition. At this point I wish only to indicate how the differentiation among the various segments of a matrilineage is reflected in the way the members site their huts in a village.

The Segmentary Process

The segmentary tendencies within the lineage are countered by unifying forces, but the cleavages between the lineage sections show up at the slightest provocation. Once the cleavage starts it widens rapidly and charges of sorcery become more and more frequent between the two sections until eventually one moves out to found a new village. A cleavage of this type has been developing in Cikoja village for the last eight years. When I left the field in 1949, talk of migration was in the air but it had not yet happened. I summarize the major events which led to the present situation.

The cleavage first manifested itself in 1942 when Bt. Mbwana (F2)[1] fought with her mother's younger 'sister' Ayesi (E8). These two were pounding at the same place in the village and Bt. Mbwana took Ayesi's flat sifting basket. She retained it for about four days without telling Ayesi that she had it. One day Ayesi saw it at the pounding point and asked Bt. Mbwana where she got it. They had a few words about it and Bt. Mbwana returned it and thought no more of it. She was pregnant at the time and was confined about a month later. It was her fifth child but she had a greatly prolonged labour. After labour had been going on for some hours, Cilimba (F1), her eldest brother, thought that there must be something wrong and sent his two younger brothers, Kasui (F3) and Gwili (F4) to a diviner. The diviner indicated that the cause of the difficult birth was that her 'younger mother' Ayesi was bearing her malice,[2] and advised that Ayesi should blow water from her mouth and declare that she bore no malice. Kasui and Gwili returned and went to Bt. Amina (E4) who was Ayesi's elder sister and told her what the diviner had said. Bt. Amina did as she was advised and fetched Ayesi to the door of the hut in which Bt. Mbwana was lying, and made her confess. The child was born immediately. After a week Cilimba and Kasui brought a complaint to the village headman Cikoja (E7). They accused Ayesi of trying to kill their sister. Cikoja sent a message to

[1] The reference numbers refer to the genealogy in Appendix D.

[2] Difficult labour is usually assumed to be due to adultery, but it may also be due to sorcery or malice. See p. 138, and Chap. VII, p. 185.

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his eldest unclue sister's first-born and second-born sons, Amidu (P18) and Kanyenga (P19), to advise them of this dispute, and told them that they would have to assume responsibility for the actions of their mother's younger sister, Ayesi. At the same time he sent to a neighbouring village to call in an unrelated man to act as arbitrator in the dispute. There was much argument and eventually the arbitrator awarded 15s. to be paid by Cikoja as leader of the junior lineage section to Cilimba as leader of the senior section. Amidu and Kanyenga found 10s. between them and gave it to Cikoja to give to Cilimba. The other 5s. they said they would try to find and pay later.

This payment formally settled the dispute but the tension was near to the surface. Amidu and Kanyenga said that there was separation in the group now that they had started to eat money. They were not wrong. Ayesi was pregnant and near to confinement. When she was confined her labour was as difficult as Bt. Mbwana's (it was also her fifth confinement). When her birthpang confessions seemed to be unavailing Bt. Bwana Isa (P16), her elder sister's daughter, went to Kanyenga to tell him that their 'younger mother' was having a difficult childbirth. Kanyenga remarked that she had had many children before and had not suffered, so that there must be some reason for her difficulty. Then Kanyenga and his sister went to Ayesi's husband's sister's hut[1] to find a representative to go with them to a diviner. When they got there Ayesi's husband's sister told her son to accompany her brother's wife's representative to the diviner. The diviner indicated that the cause of the prolonged birth was the malice felt by Bt. Mbwana because the rest of the compensation awarded had not yet been paid. He said that the only thing to do was to call Bt. Mbwana and to get her to blow water from her mouth at the hut door where Ayesi was confined. Bt. Amina went to find Bt. Mbwana and made her do this. Immediately Ayesi delivered a stillborn child.

The next morning Amidu and Kanyenga went to Cikoja and blamed him for the stillborn child.[2] Cikoja called Cilimba to listen to the complaint. Ayesi was inconsolable. She said that she had blown water for the sake of Bt. Mbwana who to-day had a child, whereas she was mourning her child. Once again Cikoja called in outsiders to act as arbitrators and the members of the two segments gathered to settle the dispute. At the end of protracted wrangling

[1] Ayesi was married to her MMMBD5 (Kasoli (D13)), whose lineage lived in another part of the same village. See genealogy and hut count in Appendix D.

[2] Cikoja is a representative of his lineage even to the lineage members. This accusation simply means that the blame lies within the lineage.

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the arbitrators awarded 30s. compensation to be paid by Cilimba to Cikoja, less 3s. owing. This money was to be paid to Ayesi in compensation for the loss of her baby. Ayesi, however, refused to accept the money because she said she wanted to have her baby. The matter now became an intra-segment affair and Cikoja, Amida, Kanyenga and Kaifa (F36), the son of Ayesi, with Bt. Amina had a meeting on what to do. Ayesi was quite adamant about it. There was nothing to do but to drop the matter, and the state of tension between the segments remained as it was before.

The next incident occurred in 1943. Mpululu, the husband of Bt. Amina, had some goats. One day two of them strayed on to the verandah of Bt. Madi's hut. Bt. Madi (F10) was the daughter of Awena (F2) and a member of the senior lineage segment. One of the goats crept its way into a basket of flour that was lying under the verandah and started to eat it. Bt. Madi came out and picked up a log that was lying nearby and threw it at the goat. It broke the goat's leg and the goat had to be destroyed. The owner, Mpululu, who was watching at that moment immediately rebuked the woman. He went and reported the matter to Cikoja and he sent a message to Mpululu's marriage surety who sent back to say that they would meet at Chiwalo's hut the following morning. The arbitrator in the case finally decided that the correct action should have been to take the goat to the owner and to lay a complaint against him. As it was he had to award compensation of 30s. to be paid to the owner of the goat. Mpululu, however, refused to take the money. He argued that although the goat was his, so was the offender.[1] He said that he was afraid of sorcery so he would take a token amount of 3s. only. Cikoja gave him this.[2]

A few months later the eldest child of Bt. Bwana Isa (F16) suddenly fell ill and died.[3] Kanyenga, Kaifa and Musa went to the diviner. Kaifa, the son of Ayesi, went as the headman's representative. Kanyenga went as the warden of the sorority-group, i.e. the child's mother's brother. Musa was the marriage surety of the child's father. Kanyenga consulted the diviner who indicated that Kanyenga's mother Bt. Amina was responsible but that she was not a sorceress. Sorcery, he said, was introduced by an unknown person who was using Bt. Amina's grumbling as a screen. Kanyenga refused to accept the finding of the diviner, saying that his mother had never been 'caught'

[1] His wife's collateral sister's child he also calls 'my child'.

[2] Mpululu is a stranger in the village and in this situation Cikoja represents both segments so Mpululu, even though the senior segment is guilty.

[3] Sudden illness, called *chisese* or 'the hammer', is believed to be without a doubt due to sorcery.

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by a diviner before. He went back and reported the matter to Cikoja who accepted the finding. Kanyenga, however, argued that the real sorcerer was using magic to confuse the diviner. After some argument Cikoja sent for the then senior living member of the matrilineage, Bt. Mkwinda (C6), who was living in Chulo district, for Mbumbi, a perpetual brother, and for Cibwana Kawinga, his perpetual mother's brother. A big meeting was held at which all the important local headmen attended. The case was argued on the point whether Bt. Amina and her husband, who was implicated in the accusation, could be sorcerers. After some arguments the court decided that it was impossible for Bt. Amina to be a sorceress without Cikoja also being a sorcerer, so that the accusation now settled on Cikoja himself. The case was taken up to Chiwalo who refused to award compensation. He reviewed the various charges of sorcery that had been made in the village before and observed that after the death of one of the supposed sorcerers the village had lived peacefully. He deplored the new friction and warned that there was to be no migration from the village. He advised Cikoja to mollify his sisters if he could. Kanyenga, Cikoja's eldest sister's son, said that he did not think that it would be possible because the headman had virtually accused his sister of sorcery. Cibwana Kawinga now said that there was no question of whether it could be done or not. It simply had to be done.

About one month after this episode, Ajisa (F16), the last-born child of Bt. Amina, who was about 2½ years old, died after two days' illness. When he was obviously very ill Kanyenga left with Mpalula to call Amidu. They went first to wake Cikoja who in turn went for Gwili (F4) to be his representative. Kanyenga went off to a diviner at daybreak without waiting for the father's marriage party. The diviner indicated that there was tension in the lineage which was at the back of the child's illness. Eventually, he indicated that Bt. Ntalika (F3) was the cause of the illness and it harked back to the dispute over the sifting basket and the goat. The diviner prepared suitable medicine and the two went back to the sick child. They got back about 8.30 a.m. and found the people congregated at the hut. In the meantime, Cikoja had sent off another divining party, Amidu (F18) and Jasuma (F7). Kanyenga prepared the medicine and gave it to the child. It seemed to be getting no better and before Amidu and Jasuma returned Cikoja sent Kanyenga and Gwili out to divine again. Then Amidu and Jasuma returned and indicated that the same person was responsible, and almost immediately afterward Kanyenga and Gwili came back with the same result. When Kanyenga heard this he went to Chiwalo and reported the matter. Chiwalo sent a messenger to call Cikoja, Bt. Ntalika and her eldest sister's son Cilimba (F1), who was the senior male member of the senior lineage

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segment. They were to go to Chiwale's hut the next morning. During the night the child Ajisa died, and Chiwale remarked that Cikoja was bad at heart and that he surely killed his people like chickens.[1] Four days later after the funeral a meeting was held to decide the cause of death. The arbitrator and chief's representative was the local court messenger. The man's party opened the discussion saying, 'If Cikoja is tired of us he should tell us. To-day he is killing his child. We know that Mpalala[2] has begotten a sheep. The sheep pen is filled and when Cikoja wants to eat he merely eats them.'[3] The arbitrator said that Cikoja had done a shameful thing and that they should make up a divining party to find the cause of death. Kanyenga immediately demurred and said that they had divined three times with the same results. Further divination was a waste of money. He insisted that they called Cibwana Kawinga. The meeting broke up and Cibwana Kawinga was called for. He came a day or two later and the meeting was resumed. He said, 'Cikoja, you are evil.[4] You have found it impossible to keep the village. Now what are you going to do with your children? The man's party says that he is going to take Mpalala away. Your brothers say that they are going to take their mothers away. Now what do you say to this?' Cikoja had no reply to make. Chiwale then said that he would have to pay compensation to his sister. Kanyenga, however, said that they did not want money. They wanted to go away. Cibwana Kawinga here checked Kanyenga and told him that they would take Cikoja and give him a talking to, and instruct him on the traditional way of keeping a village together.[5] Chiwale accepted this settlement of Cibwana Kawinga and endorsed his action.

When they got back, Cilimba told Cikoja and Mbweche that he wanted to move out of the village because his 'mother' had been called a sorceress by his 'brother'. Cikoja was anxious to avoid further trouble and told his lineage members that he was going to build a hut for his second wife some distance from the village because his first wife did not get on with her. He put up a hut about half a mile away across the Nanwewe stream. Cilimba (F1) who was living virilocally, his mother Bt. Ntalika (E1), Bt. Mbweza (F1),

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[1] This is a reference to the ghoul-motif in Yao witchlore. Cikoja here, of course, is a symbol of the whole lineage, so that this imprecation is directed toward the whole lineage and not to Cikoja personally, as in the last dispute.

[2] The father of the dead child.

[3] Mpalala had begotten eleven children. This is another reference to the ghoul-motif.

[4] Undawo—this word is also used to mean 'polluted'.

[5] *Kala mwao wakwe mwi*—'the building of a village of old'.

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Kauni (F3), Bt. Madi (F10), Bt. Aliya (F11) and their children moved across the stream and built with Cikoja. One of Cikoja's wives stayed in the old village and the other moved across. Shortly after this Asimuna (F6), Cikoja's sister, decided that she would like to move across to be with the headman. She reported to Kanyenga who sent her to tell Cikoja. Cikoja in turn sent her to tell Amida. Eventually, Cikoja, Amida, Kanyenga and Salimu (D3) had a meeting about it. Neither Amida nor Kanyenga, nor Salimu, was enthusiastic, but they said she should follow her own wishes. She moved across with her children. Asimuna's arrival on the other side of the stream was greeted with some suspicion by Cilimba because she was a member of the junior lineage. However, Cikoja assured him that he wanted one of Asimuna's daughters to fetch water for him. Cilimba was satisfied with this explanation and accepted the situation as it was.

It was not easy, however, and there were continual quarrels between the children of Bt. Ntalika and those of Asimuna. The members of the junior segment in the old village also looked upon this arrangement with some suspicion. The friendship of Amega (F28), Asimuna's daughter, with Asubiya (F9), her mother's younger sister was particularly deprecated by the members of the junior segment. Asubiya was warned several times that this friendship could only lead to sorcery.[1]

In the meantime, Salimu (D3), who will be the next Cikoja and who was the senior lineage member in the old village site, undertook most of the duties of the headman in that section. He settled most of the minor cases and saw to the divining. However, he reported his doings to Cikoja who was still the village headman.

In 1948, another death took place and the tension became evident again. Bt. Ntalika's child died. Kauni (F3) and Jauma (F7) went to the diviner, who revealed that Amega had gone to Salimu to grumble about what was going on in the other village, and Salimu had taken this opportunity of bewitching the child. Cikoja refused to accept this explanation and said that the diviner was a liar. When the body was being washed, a knife was found under the mat on which it was lying, and the story went around that a piece of flesh was taken out of the dead child's buttock.[2] Cikoja interpreted this as meaning that Bt. Ntalika herself had bewitched the child. He felt it unnecessary to call a funeral meeting. Shortly after this there was some friction between Amina and her younger sister Asubiya, arising out of jealousy because of the difference in their harvests. Bt. Amina was convinced

[1] This is based on the fear of backbiting. See p. 158.

[2] Once a person is dead the matrilineal relatives do not touch him. They leave the hut and the undertakers (*alilo*) wash the body and prepare it for burial. They reported this finding to Cikoja.

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that Asubiya in her jealousy had gone to grumble to Bt. Ntalika about this. Rajabu (F20) who had heard about this called Cikoja and they assembled Bt. Amina, Bt. Bwana Isa and Asubiya in Bt. Amina's hut, and spoke to them about the dangers of backbiting. Cikoja remonstrated with the women saying, 'I don't want to hear about this again. When you love people do not love people who are strangers. Do not talk behind people's backs and bring war in the knots of your body-cloths.'

A few weeks after this, in June 1948, Alowinda (F47), a 3½-year-old daughter of Asubiya, died. When her mother saw that the child was seriously ill she took her to her patrilateral relatives in Liwonde area. She had barely got there when the child died. The headman of the village sent a message back to Cikoja to tell him of the death. He in turn sent a message to Amidu and Rajabu and they went to the village to attend the funeral. After the first mourning feast three days after the funeral, Kaifa, the child's mother's elder sister's son, and Malawaga, representing the village in which the child had died, went to a diviner who indicated that the cause lay in the backbiting of Asubiya about Bt. Amina, but that the sorcerer was Bt. Ntalika. The tension now had reached almost breaking point and after about six months Bt. Ntalika moved out into Liwonde area without announcing that she was going.

At the end of December, Asubiya's son Selemu (F26), aged 4½, suddenly became ill one night. In the morning Amidu and Rajabu and Nkatawila (D20), who was the husband's marriage surety, went to a diviner. He indicated that the cause was a girls' initiation basket which Ayesi kept. This basket, the diviner said, kept losing its strength and it was only on the death of a close relative that it would regain power. They returned and when they got near the village they could hear the women keening. They agreed that the diviner was a liar and returned and got their money back. The body was buried on January 3rd, 1949. Asubiya now left the village without announcing her intention and went to complain to chief Kawinga. Cikoja in the meantime, noticing that Asubiya was not present at the funeral, sent out men to search for her. After two days Kawinga's chief court assessor, Masunda, brought Asubiya back to the village. He told Cikoja that he had cross-examined her and found that she said her elder sister was causing death because of her jealousy over the food. Masunda returned and some days later Kawinga wrote a letter to Cikoja telling him to come to the court village. This he did and was told to hold the mourning feast, but to take the people to the court village to hold the funeral meeting. There a divining party would be arranged and the cause of the death determined.

After the first funeral feast the people of Cikoja assembled at

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Kawinga's court village. Masunda reviewed the events leading up to the calling of the meeting and asked Cikoja to give his statement. Cikoja replied, 'You say I am finishing the people. I do not deny it. If the people are being finished by my sister, then I am finishing them.[1] You may speak what is in your hearts.' Andeiya now made her statement. After this, Bt. Amina was called out. She denied knowing anything about the case. Masunda at this point was about to send the case back to Cikoja when Matewa, a second arbitrator, asked who the marriage sureties were. Amidu came forth as the woman's surety. Matewa asked him to tell the court about Andeiya's marriage relationships. Amidu then reviewed the history of Andeiya's pregnancies. He pointed out that the first child had died.[2] The second one also died. The diviner had indicated that she had broken a sexual taboo and the child had died from *ndoka* as a result. The third child was still alive. The fourth had died recently. The fifth was the one about whom there was a case that day. He recounted how they had gone to a diviner and how he had indicated that the cause of the death lay in the backbiting which the person herself had done. Masunda cross-questioned Amidu about the *ndoka* medicine that was given and assured himself the complainant was satisfied that the second child had died of *ndoka* and not sorcery. Masunda then called Salimu since the woman was living at the old village site under Salimu's charge. Salimu, who works as a tailor in an Indian store some miles away, said that he did not have a great knowledge of the case. Cikoja said he had nothing to say. Eventually, after some hours of cross-questioning, Masunda decided that a divining party must be made up and the results of the divination reported to the court. Bt. Amina now stood up and said she was prepared to undergo the poison ordeal to prove that she was not a sorceress. She said that she would go with them to the diviner to find out the cause of the death of the child. Masunda said that they would leave the matter at that. At the village they would have to decide on a divining party and they would have to give poison to a chicken to make sure that the divination was correct. After that Cikoja would have to report the matter to Kawinga and the case would be re-opened. Nyenje was at the inquest and said to Cikoja that if they were not relatives he would have other words to say to him about this business. As it was he did not see what he had to rejoice about. Cikoja said that he did not know, but that Nyenje should ask the owner of the village. Surprised, Nyenje said, 'Who is that?' Cikoja indicated Salimu.

[1] Cikoja is talking as a representative of his lineage here.

[2] The first death in a family is never divined for, because the Yao say that if this is done, it 'would chase the father away'.

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Salimu said that Cikoja ought not to speak like that because it only made things difficult.

Two days after this Cikoja called a meeting at Salimu's hut in order to choose a divining party. Eventually they chose Kanyenga, Asimamu, Raisi and Musa. Musa was the witness for Kanyenga who represented the woman's party. Raisi represented the father's party, and Asimamu went to be his witness. Cikoja gave them 5s. and they went to look for a diviner. Eventually they found one and Kanyenga opened the consultation. The diviner indicated that the cause of the death of the child was *litukula*.[1] The party paid him and looked for a place to sleep. The following day they sought another diviner. Kanyenga again consulted and was told that Bt. Ntalika and her son were sorcerers but that the mother herself was ill with *litukula*. Kanyenga rejected the *litukula* explanation and insisted on the sorcery of Bt. Ntalika and Cilimba. The diviner consulted again and said that the main cause of the death was the *litukula* and that the sorcery of Bt. Ntalika was added to the other. Asimamu here insisted that the sorceress in reality was Bt. Amina. The diviner rejected this. He said the best way to test the divination was to give poison to a chicken. The party was at a loss to know what to do. In two divinations, a *likungo* was indicated twice, while sorcery was said to cloud the issue. They decided to give a chicken poison. They returned to Rajabu's hut in the village where he had married. Here they sent Rajabu to tell Salimu that they were about to test a chicken at the poison ordeal, but that he must not tell Cikoja. They gave two chickens poison, one for *litukula* of the mother and one for the sorcery of Bt. Amina. The *litukula* chicken died, indicating that Bt. Amina was innocent. When Cikoja was told this he refused to believe it and sent them to poison another two chickens. The result was the same. He now decided that he would take the divination to a distant place and chose to go to Ngokwe chiefdom. Kanyenga led the divination party again. They consulted the diviner and after much testing and retesting the diviner decided that the sorcerers were Bt. Ntalika and Cilimba and that the *litukula* had nothing to do with it. He also specifically excluded Bt. Amina. The diviner now told the father's two representatives to stay behind while the woman's representatives fetched Cikoja. When he came, the diviner revealed the result to him personally. Cikoja was at a loss what to do in this situation. Two divinations including poison tests had indicated that *likungo* was the cause, a third and very exhaustive one had revealed Bt. Ntalika and her son. Neither had indicated Bt. Amina.

[1] *Litukula* is a type of pimple (the generic term for which is *likungo*) which, when it comes to a head and bursts, causes the death of the last-born child.

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613 Eventually, in March, he decided to take the case up to Kawinga's court. Cikoja was not willing to accuse Bt. Ntalika and Cilimba publicly. Accordingly he went to Kawinga but he did not send for Bt. Ntalika. When Mamanda, the court assessor, heard this he refused to handle the case and told Cikoja that Bt. Ntalika had to be brought to court so that they could hear his statement. Cikoja and his people came back to the village and nothing more was done about it. In April, Rajabu wrote a letter to Cikoja telling him that he wanted to report him to Kawinga and to bring a charge for compensation against him because he had *falsely* accused his mother of sorcery.

I left the field in June and do not know what the result was.

The series of events are extremely complex. I have given only a summary of them. Nevertheless, the main themes in the history are clear enough. We see Cikoja as the representative of the lineage of any order whatsoever. We find in particular the opposition of the two collateral brothers, Kanyenga and Cilimba. They are the representatives of the two lineage segments in this situation. There is seldom any doubt about the affiliation of these two personalities. Consistently in the accounts of the divinations each rejects the diviner's finding if it accuses a member of his lineage segment. Note that the divination seance itself becomes a field in which the opposition of the segments is expressed. Kanyenga continued consulting diviners until finally he got the answer he wanted. His opponents rejected these findings and eventually even discounted the chicken ordeal. The diviners' findings and the results of the poison ordeals, therefore, are bandied about between the opposed groups, and though the whole procedure of divination and accusations of sorcery is directed towards the extirpation of discordant elements in the community, in fact, it is only a facet of the underlying cause of the tension—the opposition of segments in an ever-segmenting lineage.

613 In addition to the structural opposition of Kanyenga and
578 Cilimba there is a certain amount of tension among Cikoja's uterine sisters. Bt. Amisa, Asimama, Ayesi and Asubiya have all had children. Bt. Amisa is the senior and the relationships between her and any of the other sisters are difficult. In addition to this there is the tension between the generations seen in the attempts of the sons of Amisa to bring a compensation claim

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against Cikoja himself. It is important that not once is a member of the junior major segment, that is a descendant of Cisileka (A2), involved in the dispute. Only the descendants of Atabiya (D1) and Amalimu (D2) are involved, with the exception of Salimu who appears as the representative of the villagers on the old village site.

The Opposition of the Generations

Segmentation arises as more and more sorority-groups, the daughters of women, reach adulthood, and as the sons of the same women become old enough to undertake responsibilities for the care of the women. There is, in this situation, a fundamental opposition of generations. A woman is bound to her own sisters and at the same time she is bound to her daughters. These bonds come into conflict when her daughters want to express their unity against their mother's sister's daughters. The mother must decide whether she will go with her daughters to their new village site, or whether she will stay with her sisters and possibly with her own brother. I found consistently that a mother seldom stayed in a village when her daughters were moving out of it. The bond with her children is stronger than that with her sisters. Yet the conflict is clearly present. It finds expression in the kinship terminology. A daughter is usually identified with her mother's mother. A woman's daughter's daughter inherits her name, her position and her property in much the same way as a man succeeds his mother's brother.[1] When this has taken place the terms of address of her parental generation are now reversed. In other words her mother's brother instead of calling her, 'sister's child' (*cipwa*), calls her 'mother' (*mwa*). Sometimes the qualificative *ŵamaŵa* ('who has returned') is used to signify the difference. Her mother's mother's husband even before the succession has taken place calls her 'my wife', and I have recorded one or two marriages between a man and his wife's daughter's daughter. A man's daughter's daughter must also perform some of the funeral rites for her grandfather after his wife has died.[2]

We have among the Yao, therefore, the familiar principle of

[1] See Chap. V, p. 121.

[2] She cooks the ritual meal which he eats at the end of mourning to protect himself against *ndoka*. Here she ritually fills her mother's mother's place.

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the identification of alternate generations; and this is particularly significant when we realize that the tension between the filial and parental generations is most likely to find expression in the situation where a group of young adult women wish to leave a village, and their mother, if she is still alive, must make up her mind whether to stay or to follow them.

The existence of rules of succession for men, different from those for women, presents an interesting analytical problem which I have not yet fully explored. Clearly men must succeed to positions in the first ascending generation, for they are the active leaders in Yao society and those who are to succeed must be sufficiently mature to take over the responsibilities of leadership. Women, on the other hand, are usually not leaders so that succession to positions in the second ascending generation involves no difficulties. A young woman may take her mother's mother's name without involving any responsibilities of leadership. Yet the interaction of the two systems of succession presumably has some reaction on the social structure. A man's sister's daughter who succeeds to her mother's mother's position becomes the man's mother and the man's mother's brother's sister. The man's own sister becomes his mother's brother's mother.[1] The effect of this presumably is to achieve some balance of power between a man and his mother's brother. By the rule of succession for women, a man's sister to whom he is tied by the closest possible ties of kinship, and on whom he is dependent for political success, becomes his mother's brother's mother, so forming a common link between two potentially opposed persons. By the same reasoning a man's sister's daughter who is part of his sorority-group and who is likely to desert her mother's mother's brother to go with her mother's brother if there is a conflict, by succession becomes the sister of her mother's brother's mother's brother, so forming a unifying influence within the lineage. This problem emerged after my fieldwork was completed so that I have no evidence to support these suggestions.

Among the men, because of the struggle for political power, the opposition of alternate generations is much stronger than among women. This emerges most clearly in the institution of marriage sureties.

The duties of the marriage sureties towards their wards are

[1] I am grateful to Prof. Gluckman who pointed this out to me.

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sister's son. This, however, is not common because matters such as these, the Yao feel, ought to be settled within the matrilineage, or at least among kinsmen. The sister's usual procedure is for the mother's brother to take his complaint to some senior matrilineal relative who may be a perpetual mother's brother of the mother's brother, as say Cibwana Kawinga is to Cikoja.[1] Or if the matrilineage is part of a village, the mother's brother may take his case to his village headman, who is as likely as not his perpetual father. The senior relatives have the force of authority and public opinion behind them and frequently some agreement can be reached at this level. Where this is not possible, say because the perpetual elder relative lives too far away, the mother's brother may take the sister's son to court and bring the sanction of the Native Authority's punishment upon him. This is very rare.

There is still a certain mystical sanction behind the mother's brother's control over his junior relatives. This is based on the curse, which in turn draws on the belief in common ancestor spirits. A mother's brother may say to a sister's son or other junior matrilineal relative: 'If you have never sucked from the breast of my sister, nothing dreadful will happen to you.'[2]

The fear of sorcery is another force which operates to control the wayward activities of a sister's sons. People in senior generations are usually looked upon as having particularly wide knowledge of potent medicines. Though a sister's son may sometimes use sorcery against his mother's brother, the reverse is believed to be more likely to happen. I have recorded elsewhere[3] the details of a case where a sister's son left a village, against his mother's brother's wishes, to find work in town. He subsequently met his death in an accident while trying to get the honey out of a wild bees' hive in a treetop. At home his death was attributed to the sorcery of his mother's brother whose will he had frustrated.

On the other hand the sister's sons, while bound by an ethical code to honour and respect their mother's brothers, find that in fact these stand in the way of their own personal ambitions. A man's heir is his sister's son and it is quite understandable that there should be some tension between a man and his heir. But

[1] See p. 132. [2] See Chap. VI, p. 133.
[3] 'A Note on the African Conception of Causality', 54-5.

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the opposition between mother's brothers and sister's sons in general has a much wider basis than this. Any man is likely to have more than one sister's son of whom only one is his heir. Yet his other uterine nephews are as much opposed to him as the heir is. The tension lies in the position of the mother's brother *vis-à-vis* his sister's sons within the segmenting lineage. The different sorority-groups within the matrilineage are held together through the authority of the mother's brother. This coercive force is undermined by the attempts of the wardens of the various sorority-groups to break away and form new villages of their own. In this way the segmentation and differentiation of the matrilineage is really a facet of the general political process in which groups are for ever trying at once to demonstrate their autonomy by setting up new villages, and their unity by remaining in large integrated villages. Conflicts between sister's sons and mother's brothers, therefore, are common.[1] For a typical example we need not go outside the village that I have chosen to illustrate the localized matrilineage.

Ali Kasunka (C6) fell out with his mother's sister's daughter's son Mwanace (D10). The trouble started when Ali Kasunka who had married the sister of the cook came to live uxorilocally in Chiwalo's area. While in Zomba he had asked Mwanace to come to live virilocally in his village to keep things in order. It soon became apparent that the women were not satisfied with Mwanace and every time that Ali Kasunka visited them they had tales to tell of his failure to keep the peace. Ali Kasunka then decided that he would move his village from Zomba area to Chiwalo's where he was married, so that he could stay married to his wife in Chiwalo's area and keep control over the village. Soon after the change had taken place the infant daughter (E15) of Biti Mtemula (D19) became ill and died. Ali Kasunka went to the diviner with Adunosi, the child's father's marriage surety, to establish the cause of the death. The diviner indicated that it was the sorcery of Mwanace. Ali Kasunka took no action on this at all, but he remembered it. Some time later he himself became ill and this time his sisters Asanyerje (C8) and Biti Kasembe (C5) went to the diviner. Once again he indicated that Mwanace was responsible because he was jealous of Ali Kasunka's authority in the village. Tension increased when the husband of Biti Sale (D15), Wayison, became ill. His wife immediately went to tell

[1] In 31 village splits involving matrilineal relatives, 9 hinged on MB-ZS conflicts.

Mwanace. He was the junior marriage survey to the marriage and it was his duty to go to the man's marriage survey, report the matter and arrange to take some action to get the man well again. Mwanace, however, refused to take any action. Instead he contingly said, 'Take the matter to Ali Kasunka, it is his village.' The woman did so, and Ali Kasunka asked immediately whether she had not taken the matter to Mwanace. She replied that she had and repeated Mwanace's words. Ali Kasunka took the matter up with Mwanace who now objected to being ordered about. Ali Kasunka, however, impressed on Mwanace that the village was his (Ali Kasunka's) and the authority rested with him. He then went to the man's house to tell them of Wayiwo's illness. The man's representative came and he and Ali Kasunka consulted a diviner. They found that the man was ill from *ndoka*, which he had contracted in his home village. They found medicine and treated him and he recovered.

Things came to a head in 1947. Mwanace's younger sister Nyanga II (D11) was married to a soldier who was away. One morning she came to her mother's elder sister, Mhaleyao (C1),[1] and told her that she had found semen on her *pudenda* and could not recall having had intercourse with anyone. Mhaleyao told Ali Kasunka about this. It was clearly a matter for divination and Ali Kasunka called Mwanace and told him that they ought to consult a diviner. But Mwanace's attitude, even in such a crisis as this, was hostile. He refused and said it was not his work to do this sort of thing. Ali Kasunka therefore went to a diviner with his sister Mhaleyao. The diviner said the semen was Mwanace's. He said that he had entered her hut magically and had sexual intercourse with her without her knowing it.[2] When Ali Kasunka got back to the village he called Mwanace and asked him what tricks he was playing in the village. Mwanace said that he had done nothing—it was not his village. Ali Kasunka then vaguely hinted at his crime. Mwanace pressed for more details and Ali Kasunka accused him outright of sleeping with his sister. He had hardly uttered the accusation before Mwanace had drawn a knife and attacked him. Mwanace was screaming something to the effect that Ali Kasunka had come to him with lies about having seen a diviner. Ali Kasunka beat off the attack and reiterated the accusation. Mwanace now turned his rage upon the woman and tried to catch her. Two of the men in the village then caught Mwanace and subdued

[1] Her mother, Amaliuma, was dead.

[2] This is called *ciposenya*. It combines the use of magic with sister-incest. To the Yao mind there could be no clearer proof of sorcery. I have already mentioned the importance of sister-incest in relationship to the beliefs surrounding the sorority-group. See p. 146.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT? Yao FT?

him. The woman in the meantime had run to Chiwalo's hut half a mile away. Here she complained to the chief that Mwanace wanted to kill her. Chiwalo refused to listen to her complaints and sent for Ali Kasunka. When he had come and explained the sequence of events, he continued, saying that he would like to take the case to court. Chiwalo, who was Ali Kasunka's wife's father's sister's son (hence a classificatory younger brother) and whose henchman Ali Kasunka was, refused to arbitrate in the case but referred it to Kawinga. On the day of the case the woman's husband came back from the Army. The case was tried and eventually the court awarded a damages claim of £3 to be paid by Mwanace to his sister. The husband, at the same time, said that he could not remain married to her because whenever he saw her he would think that she had slept with her brother and in court he gave Ali Kasunka a marriage termination payment. The tension between Ali Kasunka and his 'sister's son' did not end there however. When they got back to the village Ali Kasunka remonstrated with Mwanace saying, 'Are you not ashamed to have married your sister?' Mwanace said that he could not stand that sort of thing and went back to live uxorilocally.

A crucial point in this case history is that the women did not like Mwanace. Almost certainly there would have been a split in the village had the women had more confidence in Mwanace. The tension between Ali Kasunka and Mwanace, although the conflict is inter-generational, started, as it consistently does, from the relationships of a man to the women of his matrilineage. Without the support of the women, younger brothers or sister's sons are impotent against the power of their senior relatives. It is only when they can induce the women to follow them and to leave their rivals that they can found a new village and thereby begin to earn prestige. Therefore, although the men are the active agents in bringing about a physical act of fission, they are in fact only making manifest a situation which is latent within the lineage.

The position of the senior male matrilineal relative is of fundamental importance in questions involving segmentation. His position is seen most clearly in the dominant matrilineage, in which the name of the village is inherited. The Yao practise 'positional succession'. A man not only succeeds to his mother's brother's name but also to the position of the mother's brother in the social structure as a whole.[1] It follows that when the

[1] See Chap. V, p. 122.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

pletely disappeared and we have in its place a straightforward localized matrilineage as in Ali Kasunka village.

The Headman as the Link between the Dominant Lineage and the Patrilaterally-linked Groups

A headman's position when his own children or the children of his predecessor have started to operate as a corporate group in the village is clearly difficult. To the dominant matrilineage they are outsiders, and they are a source of tension in the more complex villages. This, in essence, is the situation about which the officiating headmen have almost certainly warned him at the installation ceremony, when they told him to beware of his wife's chatter, because it may bring about a split of the village. The headman occupies a position of jural authority over his matrilineal relatives. He has succeeded to the name of his mother's brother and is structurally the most senior matrilineal kinsman in the village. He is directly responsible in court and outside it for the behaviour and welfare of the matrilineage members. At the same time he is personally attached to his children by ties of intimacy and sentiment. Where there is a conflict between his own children and the matrilineage members he is placed in an invidious position. By legal right he should support his lineage members, by moral right he cannot spurn his children. What he tries to do as a rule is to browbeat his matrilineal relatives into submission to maintain the peace within the village. He runs the risk, however, of alienating the support of his sisters who may turn to his younger brothers and leave the village. This is what happened in Mponda's village, as I have outlined earlier.[1] Here, it will be recalled, a quarrel started between two young girls over a pounding mortar. It spread to the mothers of the girls, who were the headman's wife and his sister. The headman tried to browbeat his sister into submission, but she immediately turned to her younger brother. The result was that the headman lost his sisters to his younger brother.

The way in which the two opposed groups in the village crystallize out into opposed factions cannot be more clearly shown than in the sequence of events in Mpakata village, in January 1947.

Mpakata was the headman of the village, and he had three younger brothers, Walusa, Merison and Nanculuya. Ali Cibwana, Mpakata's

[1] See Chap. VI, p. 155.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

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adult son, went to Walusa one day and borrowed a chicken. Some days afterwards Walusa asked for payment for the chicken. Ali Cibwana took offence at the way in which Walusa asked for payment and told him so. Walusa remarked that Ali Cibwana was insolent and insisted on the payment for the chicken. Ali Cibwana now said that if his father's brother insisted on asking in this rude way he would not be paid back at all. The tempers of the two men became more and more frayed until at last Walusa threw Ali Cibwana to the ground. When Sanudia, Ali Cibwana's younger brother, saw this he grabbed up a stick and came up to Walusa and asked him why he had thrown his elder brother down. Walusa had hardly time to answer before Sanudia had struck him. At this Walusa's younger brothers joined in the fight. Mpakata now rushed up and started to support his sons against his younger brothers. When Mpakata's sisters and sisters' daughters, who were pounding, heard this, they took up their pounding pestles (poles about five feet long and three inches in diameter) and came running to Mpakata's younger brothers' assistance. When Mpakata saw these women coming with their poles he dashed into his house and emerged with a stick with which he defended himself. The noise and clamour had by this time attracted a number of strangers from a nearby village and they were able to pacify Mpakata's villagers. The matrilineal relatives of Mpakata gathered in one part of the village and Walusa told them they ought to leave. They decided, nevertheless, 'to say goodbye'[1] to Kaumbwe, who was a perpetual elder brother of Mpakata. Kaumbwe called in an unrelated village headman named Idi, and they held a meeting in the village the next day.

The dispute was discussed in the presence of the arbitrator. Walusa said he wished to leave the village with his sisters. Idi, however, told him that he should not do this but that they should take the matter up to Chiwalo's court. On an agreed day Mpakata and his children and matrilineal relatives went to Chiwalo's court where the case was arbitrated on by Capola who lived near to Mpakata. He found Mpakata guilty and ordered him to pay 10*s.* to Walusa. At the same time he told Walusa that he was not to take the female members of the matrilineage away from the village. And there the matter rested.

A village headman in Yao 'binds the village',[2] and when the village is made up of linked groups as well as his matrilineal kin,

[1] Ostensibly to say goodbye but in fact to air their grievances.

[2] *Akutuwa musi.* The word *kutuwa* may also mean to build. Yao houses are built by binding poles together with ropes and then filling the gaps with mud.

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2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

the significance of this formulation of his position is clear. It is when he shows partiality that the village under him is likely to break up. If he sides with his children his matrilineal kin are almost sure to move out; if he sides with his matrilineal kin, his children are likely either to return to their matrilineal village or, if they are adult, split off to set up a village of their own. The situation is precarious for the headman and it is very difficult for him to avoid a split in the village if he cannot keep the two opposed groups at peace.

My investigations show that few villages have contained patrilaterally-linked groups through the lives of two village headmen, unless these groups were descended from slaves. When the headman dies his successor assumes his name and social rôle. He also assumes the position of father towards the remaining children, who are in fact his cross-cousins. But his relationship towards them is not the same as that of father to children. The intimate link of the blood tie has been lost and the relationship becomes formalized. As more and more headmen succeed the genealogical link between the patrilaterally-linked groups and the dominant matrilineage becomes more and more remote, and the relationship becomes more and more casual. What usually happens is that shortly after the death of the headman and father, the patrilaterally-linked group takes exception to what the new headman does or says and moves off to found a village of its own. The case history I quoted earlier [1] brought this out clearly. The new headman had had intercourse with the wives of his 'son'. The son complained to the arbitrators in the dispute that 'he should have been as a father to me, and he is not'. The result was that the son refused compensation, and moved out of the village with his sisters to build on his own. When this happens the father-son relationship between the two villages is preserved and perpetuated, but the link is entirely formal and co-operation between them is limited to mutual attendance at funerals.

Patrilaterally-linked Groups as the Legacy of Slavery

Slave-groups in a village are usually linked patrilaterally to the dominant lineage. This is because the headman who was usually the captor of the slaves kept the women as concubines. They were given quasi-child status in the village, so that their children

[1] 'The Split of Cikumba Village', see Chap. V, p. 127.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

To Ego therefore, in a lineage linked through one patrilateral link:

Any person in the first ascending generation is 'father' or 'female father'.
Any person in the same generation is 'cross-cousin'.
Any person in the first descending generation is 'child'.

Those in the second ascending generation are called 'grandparent' and those in the second descending generation are called 'grandchildren'. By the merging of alternate generations, those in the second ascending and second descending generation may also be called 'cross-cousin'.

Where the subsidiary lineage is connected to the dominant lineage through two patrilateral links the kinship terms for siblings is applied to Ego's generation. In Diagram 7 the linked lineage marked A is connected to the dominant lineage through Ego's MMBS. Ego calls his mother's mother's brother's son 'father' and, therefore, calls his mother's mother's brother's sons' children by the appropriate sibling terms.

If a subsidiary lineage were connected through three patrilateral links the kinship nomenclature would be the same as if there were only one link. Lineages connected to dominant lineages through two or more patrilateral links are very rare. Most subsidiary lineages are connected through one patrilateral link only. In any village the generation differences between members of dominant and subsidiary lineages tend to be obscured. The Yao tend to see the component lineages as wholes, and therefore speak of the relationships between members of the dominant lineage and members of the subsidiary lineages in general as 'cross-cousinship' (*cisuwani*). It is only in special situations that the exact relationship becomes important.

The pattern of behaviour between cross-cousins is consistent with this view of their rôles in the make-up of a village. In the typical Yao village there are two or three groups who are united in their extra-village affairs but opposed in internal relationships. Their hostility to each other comes to the surface at the slightest provocation, but they are, nevertheless, co-villagers. They are kin and yet not kin, because the Yao look upon kinship as primarily matrilineal. They talk of the link through the father as 'not proper kinship'. The hostility between the members of the different cross-cousin groups in the village is dissipated

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

in a joking-relationship which is more intense between men and women. Men and women in Yao public life always behave distantly to each other; hence joking-relationships are most intense between male and female cross-cousins. The joking-relationships between cross-cousins of the same sex is much more subdued and limited. The village headman himself, if he is not the actual father of the cross-cousins, is likely to be the butt of most of this. His visits to the huts of his cross-cousins to give them irksome instructions is an especial occasion for this sort of joking. Cikoja ordered his female cross-cousins to sweep a site for my tent when I first went to his village. I was most embarrassed by the insults that were hurled at his head during this procedure, but he took it all calmly and said nothing. The hostility inherent in the headman–villager relationship, together with the opposition between the dominant matrilineage and the patrilaterally-linked groups, provided an opportunity *par excellence* for joking. Thus the joking between cross-cousins in the village context is a means whereby the hostility between the component groups is dissipated and the harmony within the village maintained.

The groups are, of course, welded more closely by cross-cousin marriages which are not only allowed but prescribed. By cross-cousin marriage a man from one of the component groups of the village may marry and yet not leave the village. He may in fact have to build a hut in another part of the village, but this is obviously not the separation that uxorilocal marriage entails. At the same time, in a village where the headmen have married their cross-cousins, there will be fewer patrilaterally-linked groups, so that the village will be less complex and consequently less liable to internal dissension. If cross-cousin marriages were not practised, and if the children of the headmen and senior members of the linked lineages did not return to their matrilineal villages on the death of one of their parents, the intra-village situation could in time become extremely complex. Assuming that each linked group had at least one male member married virilocally, the number of related groups would double itself in each generation.[1] However, because of limiting economic factors I describe later and the disruptive social processes within villages, this situation never occurs in practice, and Yao villages on the whole remain relatively simple in structure.

[1] See detailed argument and diagram in *Seven Tribes*, 333.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

As garden land becomes scarcer, members of the village have probably approached patrilateral or affinal kinsmen in other villages for personal grants of land. The lands immediately surrounding the village have long since become depleted and crops will only thrive on lands some miles away; then the village moves its site. How long it will be before this becomes necessary, depends on the fertility of the soil. Most villages must move eventually. When they do they may move a few hundred yards only, or on the other hand, they may select a site thirty to forty miles away. Whether the site is far or near, the migration is not a mass movement of the village as I have so far assumed for the purposes of analysis. As a rule a few villagers, including the headman, move first. The headman may be there a year or more before the second lot of villagers move. They usually move in sorority-groups so that when they build at the new site they place their huts in sections. Thus, the internal social organization of the village is reflected in the same way as before. The whole move may take three or four years before it is completed.

This process of development of the village and its gradual and continual reformation is sometimes hastened by the conflicts that appear within it. I have from time to time mentioned various conflicts that have led to the split of a village and the subsequent migration of one of its sections. The new section sets up a small hamlet in a distant locality, especially if the reason for its secession was sorcery. Here the general process of evolution is started anew. Its parent village, however, is strengthened by the migration since the dissident elements have left it. It continues to carry on its existence and to throw off other villages from time to time.

The number of villages, in the area I studied, is increasing with the increase of population, but the average size of each village remains constant and appears to have done so for many years.[1] But at the same time some villages as entities are disappearing while new ones are being formed. A few new villages become resorbed by their parent villages when for some reason they cannot continue their separate existence. Other villages fragment and do not split. The individual village members leave the village and go their separate ways. Very frequently when

[1] See the argument in Chap. II, p. 40.

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The dog.....*mee wee!* (as in beet).
The cat.....*ngwa!*
The cock.....*kakalika!*
The lion.....*ku ku ku!*
The duck.....*kwa kwa kwa!*
The cow.....*mee!*
The sheep.....*kee!* (as in bette).
The goat.....*mbe!*
The dove.....*coo coo!*
The lion.....*ng'weeng'u!*

195 578 Among the Yao, abuse and obscene language are rare; expressions which appear in other languages all the world over are only used on great provocation and commonly with dire results. This, too, is opposed to the ways of neighboring tribes, the Anyanja and Angoni, who freely make use of such expressions as "*Nyini ya maka!*" and "*Nkunga wa maka!*" "The pudenda of your mother! Clitoris of your mother!"

The following exclamations of abuse and expressions of obscenity will be seen to follow very closely upon those in other countries.

1. *Mwinikwasa!* (to a girl or woman), *mbalale!* (to a boy or man) means you are a person who has not been to your *Unyago*, and therefore "you are without manners!"

2. *Mwana mkunguse!* an expression to a child meaning "you little wretch," "you nasty little thing!"

3. *Akulile kwe kpasa!* he eats with the back of his hand, he is uncircumcised, i.e. "he is a dirty person!"

4. A man with big ears is hailed "look at your ears like a lemur!" (*Likomba*, a lemur).

A Yao woman seldom or never sneers at or uses bad language to a man nor the converse; the woman, however, is not behindhand in the art of bitter complaining and nagging.

[207] Pulling down the lower eyelid with the finger accompanying some exclamation has exactly the same significance as in European countries, "I am not so green as I look!"

Ku-soopa is to make a sound like "pish" with the mouth, and is a great insult, for which a man will fight.

Screwing of the lips to one side as in the action to get rid of the sour skin of a fruit, *ku-mun'g'unya* is an expression of contemptuous disgust.

G95 539 The similarity to European ways is again seen in swearing or taking oath. A Yao swears by the spirits of his ancestors or by a chief:

"*Chirini cha Malenya!*"
"(By) the grave of Malenya!"

or he may indirectly name some ancestor:

"*Ngakombila lipanga!*" or "*Ngakombila liimba!*"
"I swear by the spear!" "I swear by the lion!"

3:Stanrus D-5 (ca. 1912) 1922 FT7 Yao FT7

Both before and after the introduction of guns, the Yao used spears, *lipanga*, and bows, *uhanje*. The spear is a five foot long throwing spear with metal head and wooden shaft. No shield was used. Bows and arrows are made from the wood of the *tane* or *pimbinguelo* tree. The string is made of tendon. A double-bellied bow called *uhanje wa mbamo* was sometimes used, but, I believe, originally came from the Anyanja. The arrows, *mpamba*, have a metal arrow-head, and were often poisoned with *kombe*. 411

Hunting. The same weapons are used in hunting: the gun, the spear, and the bow and arrow. Smaller bows and arrows made with bamboo or reed shaft are also employed for shooting birds; one of the arrows has a blunt wooden head and serves to stun the bird. 224 411

From the Anyanja, the Yao learned the use of a harpoon for spearing the hippopotamus. The harpoon is a heavy spear-head of iron about eighteen inches long, attached to a rope and float. From the Anyanja, also, was learned the use of the falling block with spear for killing hippo. [177]

Elephants are caught in staked pits, and the larger antelopes are similarly trapped in pits with the sides sloping inwards towards the bottom, so that as the animal falls lower and lower with expiration, it is eventually suffocated. 224

Small buck are driven by dogs into nets set for long distances in the forest, and then speared or shot. Traps are also set for these smaller antelope and for many other small animals, rodents, etc. Birds are shot or trapped. Bird-lime is also employed. It is prepared from the juices of a number of trees by pounding the vegetable matter in water; the sticky mass so made is applied to sticks or poles. The sticks are placed near drinking places so that the birds alighting to take water become entangled. The poles are affixed to trees so that they appear to be the topmost boughs; this the native does, recognising the common habit of birds to sit on the very top of trees. The strength of the bird-lime is made according to the size of the bird he wishes to catch. [231] 223

Fishing. I am not sure how far the Yao is a natural fisherman. Not long ago he used only a many-pronged spear to catch his fish. Since then, he has acquired from the Anyanja the knowledge of making fish-traps and nets, and of using the fish poison. When the Yao came to live and intermarry among the Anyanja, there was one practice of the latter which they would not adopt and which caused a good deal of ill-feeling. A Mang'anja man coming home after fishing always used to prepare the fish and, leaving some ready to cook, he cooked others for his wife, bringing her water at the same time to wash her hands. After eating her own fish, she cooked the rest for her husband. A Yao would never cook for his wife. 226 [578 563]

Traps. The following is a list of some of the traps I have found in use among the Yao. The sketches will serve to explain their mechanism better than a lengthy description. Some are very ingeniously made, and most recall similar traps made in other parts of the world. 224

1. *Lukunji lwa litawala*, a trap for the cane-rat (Pl. XIX, fig. 1).

2. *Lukunji lwa mbindi*, a trap for sharp-toothed gnawing animals, so called from

5: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1948) 1949 FT7 Yao FT7

authorities to-day: those of the British administration. Yet the headman is a key official, if usually unpaid, in that administration. For example, he has to report suspicious deaths and illnesses and strangers, and he has to see that his villagers keep the village clean, hoe paths, use latrines, follow agricultural and veterinary regulations, pay tax, &c. He is no more ready than they are to accept these as good, but he tries to enforce the rules for he is liable to be punished if he does not, by fining, imprisonment, and ultimately deposition. As he applies these unwelcome and unaccepted rules, his position becomes subject to still greater strains.

II. THE YAO OF SOUTHERN NYASALAND

J. C. MITCHELL

THE Yao people were notorious at the end of last century because of their reputation as slavers. Livingstone had noted their close association with the Arabs in this trade and much of the effort of the early administrators of Nyasaland was directed to suppressing the slaving activities of the Yao. While the slave trade has been fairly well studied, the associated but different phenomenon of domestic slavery has not been nearly so thoroughly investigated. It seems that domestic slavery was an important part of the Yao social structure in those days, before the coming of the white man abolished at one stroke this and many other social institutions. But, though the institution of domestic slavery ceased to exist, the system of values upon which it was built still survives and still affects the social structure of the modern Yao. We might summarize this system of values by saying that the status of a man depends on the number of people over whom he exercises certain rights and for whom, in turn, he is responsible. In the past, a man could increase his status in the community by acquiring slaves. This he did by buying them with calico obtained through the slave trade, or with ivory, beeswax, tobacco, and other natural products; by taking them in compensation for the death of a relative; or simply by kidnapping them. Slaves were often taken as spouses by the members of the group over which the man exercised his command, or by the man himself as wives, and thus the group was further enlarged by natural increase. Though these slaves and slave-children had fairly well-defined rights, they were not free to leave the command of their owner, and the group was from that point of view a stable one. The leader's command over his matrilineal and other relatives, however, was not so absolute and it is with this aspect of the social structure that I am here concerned. This system of values still persists and forms the basis for evaluating the status of men in the Yao community. The high status of a village headman is usually expressed in such terms as: 'He is a big man—he has many people', or 'he has many huts'. The village headman himself and the men under him are motivated by the same system of values so that in any village at any time there is a balance between the desire of certain members of that village to break away and establish units with their own dependants, and the desire of the headman to retain those people under his charge.

The tensions that exist in this situation are well recognized by the Yao and they always express them explicitly during the ceremonial succession to village headman-

5: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1948) 1949 FT7 Yao FT7

ship. The difficulties of his position are brought home to the neophyte village headman in speeches made by old and experienced men. On one such occasion I heard a man say, 'Some men who marry into a village are bad and can split a village like this one by telling lies to the headman, saying that his sisters are talking behind his back and are insulting him. When a headman hears all this he might break his village by ill-treating his relatives, thus causing himself to be left all alone.' In this way the headman's responsibility for maintaining harmonious relations between the members of the village and himself is emphasized. His failure to do so results in what they call a break in the village—the departure of some of the members to live elsewhere—which is a severe blow to the status of the headman. In fact, he is dependent on his dependants for status, and the Yao are quick to point this out to neophyte headmen, saying, 'A tree cannot grow without branches.'

We can better understand the situation if we consider the social structure of the Yao village a little more closely. The Yao are a matrilineal people and are dominantly matrilocal. They live in small groups of huts scattered fairly evenly over the country and from a few hundred yards to possibly a mile or so apart. Such clusters may contain as few as five or as many as sixty or more huts, occupied by between 20 and 200 people.

These people are almost always kinsfolk, and in the smaller villages they are usually all either matrilineal descendants of a common ancestress or their spouses. In the larger groups there is a more complex situation which I shall analyse below. In the simpler groups there may be no male matrilineal descendant in the village and the leadership of the group is taken over by a senior female descendant of the founder of the village. Usually, however, if the group is large, one of the male matrilineal descendants lives patrilocally in the village and assumes leadership.

The relationship between a male matrilineal descendant and the female matrilineal descendants who are in his charge is signified by the word '*mbumba*'. The word particularly refers to the relationship between a man and his sisters and I have therefore translated it as 'sorority-group'. It includes a man's full sisters, matrilineal female collaterals (whom he calls sisters), their female children, and the female children of those female children, and so on. It is usually used in the sense of 'somebody's sorority-group'. A man belonging to the descent-group of the sorority-group may refer to these women as 'our sorority-group'. The man who is in charge of the sorority-group is referred to as the *ajuwa mbumba*. This could be translated as 'owner of the sorority-group' but because of the property associations with the word 'owner' in our language, I have instead translated this as 'warden of the sorority-group' which expresses more accurately the relationship between a man and his female relatives. Even in those groups where there is a female in charge of the village and no male matrilineal descendant is resident in the group, there is usually some one man, possibly married in some other village, who is warden of the sorority-group. The warden of a sorority-group has certain precise duties to perform on behalf of his charges. First, he is concerned with the good relations between members of the sorority-group and with other such groups. He has to settle most of the domestic quarrels that take place between members of the sorority-groups. Second, and this is considered to be a most important function, he is the person who is the

marriage-surety for the marriages of the members of the group. Briefly this means that he must be approached before a marriage can be legally contracted by any member of his charge, he or his representative is present at the ceremony which formally announces the marriage, and he is responsible for the behaviour of his female relative in that marriage. Third, he is immediately concerned with the physical welfare and health of his sorority-group. He must track down the sorcerers causing their illnesses and supply the medicine to heal them. He has to arrange for the ritual purification of mourners after the death of one of the sorority-group's members. Fourth, he must be present in the court-house if one of his charges is involved in a case and he is usually looked to for the money for the fine. I have known a case not to begin because the warden of the sorority-group was not present. Frequently if the husbands of the female members of his charge default, he has to provide the hut-tax money.

Usually the warden of the sorority-group is the eldest brother of a group of adult full sisters. The younger brothers of the group of sisters, while concerned with their welfare, do not stand in this particular responsible position. They refer to the sorority-group as ' our sorority-group '. The elder brother refers to the sorority-group, be it noted, as ' my sorority-group ', and this sets him over and against his younger brothers. The position that the warden holds, however, is not rigidly fixed, for a younger brother may assume control of the sorority-group if for some reason he is dissatisfied with the way in which affairs are being conducted, and is able so to assert himself.

If we recall that the status of a man in a Yao community is determined by the number of dependants that he can command, it is easy to see that relationships between an elder brother and his younger brother are distinctive. The elder brother is responsible for the actions of his younger brother in much the same way as he is for one of his sorority-group, and the younger brothers have a great emotional attachment to their older brothers. Yet at the same time the elder brother stands in the way of the younger brother in his striving for status, in that while the elder brother is warden of the sorority-group the younger brother cannot be, and therefore cannot have dependants and status. It is not surprising to find that accusations of sorcery are frequently made between brothers and the result often is that the younger brother takes the sorority-group away from his sorcerer brother to some other place and sets up a new village with it. Therefore, one possible source of instability in a Yao village lies in the operation of the kinship system in a system of values which reckons status by adherents.

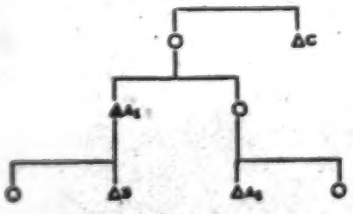
I have thus far been describing the simpler types of village. In the larger groups it is common for the warden of the sorority-group to live in the village where his sorority-group is. Then he usually brings one (or sometimes more) of his wives to the village, where she lives patrilocally. The daughters that are born to her do not return to the sorority-group from which the headman's wife came but marry and set up households near their mother in the village of their father. Thus there develops in time a second sorority-group in the village, alongside the first sorority-group, and related to it through the headman. At this point we may say that the man's position has changed from that of headman of a village containing a single sorority-group, to the more complicated and less secure one of village headman over a more hetero-

5: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1948) 1949 FT7 Yao FT7

genous group, in which his jurisdiction over one part of the village arises from his position as the warden of a sorority-group, and that which he exercises over the other sorority-group derives partly from his position as a non-matrilineal relative and partly from his own personal qualities. The warden of the second sorority-group is the headman's own son and it is he who takes over all the functions proper to that position, but the successor to the headmanship is a man's sister's son, usually, though not invariably, the first-born son of the eldest sister. Each village headman in turn brings his wife to live in his village and each headman's wife in turn tends to set up a fresh group which is of a different lineage affiliation from that of the headman. In addition to this the warden of the sorority-group formed from the first headman's children tends in due course to live patrilocally and the children of his wife set up yet another foreign group in the village. Hence, theoretically, with each generation the number of opposed groups in a village doubles itself, and in a few generations, were this to continue, the position would become extremely complex. In fact a village of long standing is seen to be composed of a central lineage group to which the headman belongs, and a series of other lineage groups related to the headman's lineage group through one or other of the past and present headmen of that village. Such groups of different lineage make-up are usually mutually opposed and are held together only by the combined influences of a weak patrilineal connexion with the headman's lineage and the personality of the present headman.

This situation is clearly an uneasy one for the headman. His wife is looked upon as a stranger and is often made to feel it. The headman's sorority-group often expresses its hostility and jealousy towards her. The children of the two groups are on no easier terms. They call each other 'cross-cousin' (*asiwasi*) and are expected to marry one another. At the same time the hostility between them is formulated in joking relationships. This critical situation of the headman is made clear to him on the day of his succession. One headman was told: 'As you have got wives, do not listen to what they say. They may be lying. Sometimes they will quarrel with your sisters and say that your sisters have been insulting you. This is false. When you hear these reports you may be unfair to your sisters and the people will say that you have broken your village through listening to nonsense.' Thus when conflicts arise between members of a village the headman is in a peculiar position and it is difficult for him to remain impartial. In such a situation the tendency is to call in an outsider to try to settle the differences. Sometimes these differences are patched up and the village continues as a unit. But, particularly after the death of the first village headman, the tendency is for one of the groups to move away to a completely new area, there to set up a unit of its own.

I quote an actual case to illustrate this procedure:



5: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1948) 1949 FT7 Yao FT7

'In 1946 village A had about 30 huts in it. A certain man B was the son of the previous headman called A_1 and hence mother's brother's son or cross-cousin of the present headman called A_2. B had two wives living patrilocally and while B was serving in the Army he had a letter from one of his sisters (i.e. his mother's brother's daughter or cross-cousin to the headman) to say that A_2 was sleeping with B's wives. When B returned he started making inquiries from his wives and he eventually secured a confession from them. B then went to a man called C, who stood in the relationship of mother's brother to the original A_1 and complained about the behaviour of the village headman. C also instituted inquiries and ascertained that it was true. C then approached a local headman of some standing (whom I shall call D) and asked him to arbitrate in the case. D pronounced A_2 guilty and awarded compensation of £6. 10s. to B. B, however, refused to take the money, and said that he wished to leave the village. D observed that he had every right to do this and that A_2 had no right to complain 'since he had broken the village himself'. B took his sorority-group, who occupied about twenty of the thirty huts, to a place about thirty miles away and set up a village of his own. The sorority-group of the village headman A_2 remained behind in the old village.'

This case illustrates the points that I have made. It shows how the two groups in this village stand opposed to each other in that B's sister wrote to tell him of A_2's conduct. Also when the village did break up it did so along certain very clear lines of genealogical relationship. Second, it illustrates the operation of the desire for dependants in that B refused what by Yao standards is a very large sum of money for compensation and preferred to move off and establish a village of his own. This attitude is also shown by the arbitrator who takes the point of view that regrettable as it is, the village must in the circumstances split, and while he appreciates the headman's feelings he makes it clear that the headman has no one to blame but himself. Third, it is interesting to note that this split took place after the death of the old village headman when the personal ties with both opposed groups were severed. Though the new village headman A_2 assumes the kinship terms of his predecessor and also calls the children of A_1 'children' yet in fact he is their cross-cousin while the old village headman was their father.

The position of the village headman in Yao social structure may be summarized thus: the village headman is the leader of a group which may be a simple kin-group or a composite group of two or more opposed matrilineages linked to each other through himself or one of his predecessors whom he represents to them. The numerical size of the village determines the status of the headman, but the size that it can reach is limited by an immanent instability in the kinship structure which is expressed, in terms of their status system, first, in the competition of brothers for the wardenship of the sorority-group, and second, in the competition between the headman and the wardens of the patrilinially linked sorority-groups, who wish to set up villages of their own.

The Yao see villages as units and this is clearly shown at the initiation ceremonies of boys, when the initiates are kept in grass-sheds, each partition of which refers to a particular village. In the same way a person is identified as belonging to a particular village known by the name of the village headman. Thus a man might say: 'I come from Kumpumbe's village.'

643 There is little doubt that village headmen did
622 wax in power and finally break away to form the
578 nucleus of a chiefdom of their own. The chief that a headman had left could do little to regain his lost subject and he had to rule not by tyranny but by tact. Duff MacDonald, for instance, records: "When a quarrel arises between the chief of the country and an important headman the latter may rebel and found a new kingdom, thus depriving the old chief perhaps of one-third of the villages in his dominion". [1] Nkanda is an example. "Nkanda of Cherasulo was at first a headmen of Kumpama's but rebelled and lives on the Southern side of that mountain an easy day's march from Blantyre." [2]

643 The leader was known, and is still known to-day, by the term *anyene cilambo*. This might be translated as "owner of the country" but the term "owner" in this context would be a mis-translation. I prefer to translate this phrase as: "The person with whom a certain area is identified". [3] Hence when a man says, as the Yao do: "I come from Kawinga's", he does not mean that the land is owned by Kawinga, but that Kawinga is the most important man in that area.

645 Among the village headmen in the area under a
631 particular leader there were a number of trusted
692 village headmen called *nduna*, which term I
622 have translated as "councillors". These councillors had special duties to perform. They were in the nature of governors in outer areas and each had a number of other villages under his jurisdiction. By this I mean that these villages were supposed to take certain cases for trial to him and to approach the leader through him. The councillors were supposed to visit the village of the chief each morning and to report anything untoward. The councillors also had the important duty of advising the chief, particularly in connexion with raiding of neighbouring tribes. Councillors also arbitrated in the domestic affairs of the chief and in the all too frequent conflicts between the Chief, his sister's sons and his younger brothers.